ILDEGERTE,

QUEEN OF NORWAY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

FROM THE GERMAN OF

AUGUSTUS VON KOTZEBUE,

AUTHOR OF THE STRANGER.

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ILDEGERTE,

QUEEN OF NORWAY.

WHO art thou, Oh heroine! endowed with the powerful ſpirit of Odin (1), and graced with the captivating ſweetneſs of Freya? (2).—Who art thou, whoſe image darts its rays ſo bright through the cloud which veils the wonders of antiquity?—Riſe, riſe, ſacred ſhade of Ildegerte, riſe from the holy habitations of Vingolf (3)—thou, before whoſe name I bend my knee, as heroine, as wife, as mother!

Swend was the Prince's name whom Thora bore, to reign hereafter over Norway.—As yet, the cradle was his throne, the roſe-bud his ſceptre. As yet he felt no pain but hunger, and no reſt but ſleep. With female penetration and manly ſpirit, Thora ruled the raw Norwegians;—with female gentleneſs and manly firmneſs, ſhe conducted her beloved ſon, from the narrow limits of infancy to the wide-extending path of youth. He grew. Upon his countenance bloomed the hope of the approaching morn, and grey-headed warriors, when they ſaw him, ſtroked their beards, and ſmiled.

No coſtly ornaments and ſilken garments, no ſtudied ſmiles and borrowed roſes, at that time, occupied the morning hours of Northern women. The girl who wiſhed to

pleaſe a Norwegian, muſt renounce the common employments of a female, and accuſtom herſelf to the warlike toils of man; muſt curb the ſteed of Iceland with uncovered hand, muſt kill the flying game with certain arrow, and oppoſe her glittering ſhield to the threatening ſword of her companion.

Thora, herſelf a perfect miſtreſs of theſe exerciſes, aſſembled a troop of Amazons, who, led by her, chaſed the wolf and bear through almoſt impenetrable foreſts. Oft did the Queen ſit on ſome lofty bank, and feaſt upon theſe ſports; yet ever did her eye beam moſt friendly on her deareſt companion Ildegerte; for none like her could vault upon the back of the impetuous ſteed; none ſent the arrow ſo certain to its mark; none broke a lance with ſo much grace.

And when ſhe raiſed her viſor to regain her breath; when her full blue eye glanced round more dangerous than her ſword; when ſhe moved, and the plume upon her helmet ſlowly nodded; when ſhe ſpoke, and her voice ſurpaſſed the ſweetneſs of the flute—Oh! then aroſe in the heart of the young Prince an indeſcribable ſenſation, which his wary mother ſaw, now in his glowing eye, now in his glowing cheek. She ſaw it with a ſmile of content; for though no royal blood flowed in the veins of Ildegerte, yet was ſhe the laſt ſurviving branch of a noble family, and would, if the daughter of a boor, have been worthy of the firſt throne on earth. Who was able to enchant each heart like Ildegerte? Who ſeemed ſo little to intend it? Her companions ſaw her, and were envious; they ſpoke to her, and envy vaniſhed.

About

About that time Canfried, the young King of Sweden, was travelling through the Northern Courts. Ambition brooded in the dark receſſes of his ſoul. The thirſt for power flaſhed from his ſcowling eye. Not content to ſway the groaning inhabitants of Sweden with an iron ſceptre, he reſolved, by the ſucceſs of a robber's arms, to encircle his brow with a triple crown. For this purpoſe was it that he traverſed Denmark and Norway—for this purpoſe was it that he cautiouſly approached their thrones, and ſpied into the ſituation of their ſtrength and weakneſs. He was handſome as Utgarda-Loke (4), and villanous as he; cruel as the wolf Fenris (5), and poiſonous as the Midgard (6) ſerpent.

In honour of her gueſt, Thora appointed a ſplendid tournament. Towards the decline of day, when the Knights, weary of warlike

diverſions, had diſencumbered themſelves of their helmets, the young heroines of Norway (ſuch was Thora's will) entered the liſts with courteous air, and demanded that Canfried ſhould break a lance with them. With a ſmile the young King ſeized his ſpear (for he was well verſed in chivalry); with a ſmile he threw himſelf upon his prancing charger, and rode into the open liſts. But againſt his nervous arm the force of the Amazons was vain; their lances ſplit againſt his ſhield, like the light gondola on the craggy rock. At length appeared Ildegerte. The purple beams of the ſetting ſun ſhone on her poliſhed helm; the ſteed ſoon felt her ſpur; ſwift as an arrow ſhe ruſhed againſt the King. Her lance ſhivered; but Canfried's feet flew from the ſtirrups, and ſcarce could he preſerve his ſeat.

« Thou

"Thou art ſtrong," cried the aſtoniſhed Swede, "let me behold the countenance of my antagoniſt."

Ildegerte ſprung nimbly from her horſe, caſt away her helmet, and her auburn locks fell in artleſs ringlets down her ſnow-white neck. The look which ſhe caſt on Canfried ſubdued him on the ſpot: it was a look full of dignity, ſweetened by a half-ſmile; but even half a ſmile from Ildegerte might have animated a ſtone. The proud tyrant of Sweden ſtammered forth his admiration, and, like a loneſome flower upon a barren heath, love took root in his heart.

Already was the lamp of day extinguiſhed in the ocean; already the bright moon had riſen in the unclouded ſky, when the jocund

troop, after having quaffed the overflowing horn, wandered into the cool refreſhing wood. Here ſome Knight was ſtretched upon the graſs, and ſuing to the dear object of his love for the reward of conſtancy. There the Scalds (7) were heard to chaunt the deeds of ancient times, and bliſsful ſpirits of Valhall (8); while the nightingale ſweetly intermixed her warblings with the lofty ſong. Here two friends ſauntered, arm in arm, engaged in confidential diſcourſe; there a dozen nymphs were ſporting near a murmuring rill.

Deep in the thickets was a fall of water, which formed a baſon at the mountain's foot. Near to the graſſy edge there laid a moſſy ſtone, warmed by the heat of day. Here, in the cool of eve, was Ildegerte wont

to

to bathe. Naked ſhe ſat upon the ſtone, while the ſmall waves curled to the bank, and kiſſed her feet. To-day too ſhe ſtole away (perceived, as ſhe thought, by none but the chaſte moon), far from the gay buſtle of the Court, to this her favourite ſpot. As the wood reſounded ſtill with noiſe and jubilee, ſhe ventured not, as uſual, to caſt away her burdenſome attire; but drawing her garment to her knees, and throwing her ſandals on the graſs, ſhe ſtepped into the water where it was ſo ſhallow that it ſcarce ſprinkled her ancles.—Chaſte girl! the inviſible hand of Gefione (9) was ſtretched above thee; for, inſpired with brutal paſſion, Canfried watched thy ſteps, ruſhed through the thicket, and, with a peal of laughter, took the ſandals from the bank.

"Prince," ſaid Ildegerte, turning round, and letting her garment fall, "Prince, in this country we think ſuch conduct improper."

"How!" replied Canfried, "improper to ſurpriſe a lovely girl when ſhe is bathing! Then, pardon me, the Norwegians deſerve to have no lovely girls among them."

"And if the females of your land," returned Ildegerte, "allow themſelves to be ſurpriſed ſo willingly, they indeed deſerve ſuch conduct as your's.—Return my ſandals, and begone."

"You might as well deſire me to loſe my ſenſes," anſwered Canfried.

"Then,

"Then, Prince," cried Ildegerte, enraged, "you have loſt all ſenſe of decency; and ſenſe, without decency, is a tree without leaves."

"Admirable!" exclaimed the King, "you can play on words as well as hearts. But, with due deference to your decency and ſenſe, allow me to bind theſe ſandals to your feet again."

"I command you to begone," cried the fair heroine.

"Do you think yourſelf in danger?" returned Canfried.

"Oh no!" anſwered Ildegerte diſdainfully.

"You are ſevere," ſaid he. "You do not even think me dangerous? Come, away with this deriſion and this ſcorn! Ildegerte, I love you!"

"Likely enough truly, after an acquaintance of two hours," rejoined ſhe.

"So much the more flattering to you," ſaid the King.

"I muſt own I did not know it," replied ſhe; "I can at leaſt find nothing but my face to thank for it."

"No, Ildegerte; thou haſt wounded me deeply. Fair thou art as Noſſa (10)—wiſe as Vora (11).—I have a wife whom I dare not ſpurn from me, for her father is a powerful

ful Prince; but come to my arms! Thou ſhalt be treated as a Queen. Come, ſhare my heart and bed."

"To ſuch a propoſition," anſwered ſhe, "Ildegerte has but one reply."

She ſtruck him on the face, and fled.—Furious and vengeful he ruſhed after her; but with airy ſteps, that ſcarcely ſkimmed the tender graſs, Ildegerte glided through the wood, led by the echoing horn, which ever attended on the Queen. There ſhe humbled herſelf at the feet of Thora, and was ſilent. The purſy Swede, who likewiſe ſoon arrived, felt no deſire to mention, in the preſence of witneſſes, the indignity he had ſuſtained. But, ere long, the Queen diſcovered Ildegerte's naked foot, and aſked her

her favourite why ſhe was without ſandals.

"I went," anſwered Ildegerte, with unaltered look, "to waſh my feet; I threw my ſandals on the graſs, and conclude that ſome beaſt of the foreſt muſt have ſtolen them."

"That beaſt was I," roared out Canfried, with grim ferocity; "that the ſandals belonged to you, I knew not; for had I known it, they had lain there ſtill."

With theſe words he caſt them at Ildegerte's feet.

"Prince," ſaid Thora, with an air of ſolemn majeſty, "when next you come into

into my kingdom, remember that it is my kingdom."

Canfried returned no anſwer. Swend looked aſkance at him. The courtiers murmured. Ildegerte ſmiled. This moment was the dreadful ſource of many a crime, of many a fatal hour. The enraged Swede, whoſe heart was the lurking place of every villany, returned that very night to his native country, and carried the ſable poiſon of revenge deeply rankling in his breaſt.

Slowly and mournfully approached the hour in which Thora, the mother of her people, paid the debt of nature, and was tranſported to the everlaſting joys of Vingolf. She expired in the arms of Ildegerte and her ſon;—ſhe expired as ſhe pronounced her bleſſing

bleſſing upon both.—Amidſt the unfeigned lamentations of many thouſands of her ſubjects was the grave prepared, which was to cover her remains. Silent, and with overflowing eyes, the pooreſt perſon brought ſome gift to be buried, according to the cuſtom of the country, with the dead. No Knight was aſhamed of the tear which ſtarted in his eye. Swend ſobbed, and hid his face. Ildegerte threw herſelf upon the grave, and waſhed her diſhevelled locks with tears.—Still was ſhe lying there, in torpid grief, when Midnight had ſpread her mantle over wood and ſea.

The murmuring waves, the ruſtling pines, and Ildegerte's groans, were the only interruptions of the deep tranquillity. At lengt the morning broke upon her ſorrows, but it

preſaged

preſaged a dreary rainy day. The feathered ſongſters crept into their neſts; the ravenous vulture only hovered in the air. Ildegerte ſprung up—caſt another inexpreſſible look of ſorrow on the grave, wet with the dew of heaven and her tears—threw a lock of hair upon it, and fled—fled with her companions to the innermoſt receſs of a wood, where, in the ſhade of rugged oaks, an ancient caſtle offered an aſylum to the fugitives, who long taught its walls to echo ſighs for the loſs of Norway's benefactreſs.

Swend, now nineteen years of age, mounted his mother's throne, and followed her inſtructions by promoting the happineſs of his people, by liſtening to, and relieving the unfortunate, by chuſing proper objects for his

his friendſhip, and by fulfilling all the duties of a Knight.

But love accompanied him to the throne. In the midſt of ſtate concerns, in the aſſemblage of his Knights, in the temple of juſtice, at the altar of Odin, his eye wandered round in ſearch of Ildegerte. His heart miſſed her at the jocund feaſt, at the chorus of the virgins, and combat of the lance.

" What ſtrange ſenſation" ſaid he to himſelf (when he had one day ſtolen from the table, where the ſparkling brimmer invited him in vain, where the Scalds in vain ſtruck the ſilver chords, and ſung the noble deeds of his forefathers), " what ſtrange ſenſation makes my throne to me a dreary ſepulchre—my heart inſenſible to the joys of

of benevolence and friendſhip? Away with this ſplendid ſlavery! The holy raptures of Valhall could not force a ſmile from me, as long as Fate forbids me to enjoy it doubly in the arms of love. What binds my tongue, that it makes not the confeſſion which floats upon my lips? What chains my hand, that it lays not crown and ſceptre at her feet, for whom the crown and ſceptre ſeem to have been formed?—Away to Ildegerte!—What is birth? Can royal blood make a fool wiſe, or a villain virtuous?—Oh! in her alone can Thora live again! With her alone can I taſte the pleaſures of a throne!"

He ſpoke, and went to ſacrifice in Louna's (12) temple.

"Reverend

"Reverend old man," ſaid he, addreſſing the Prieſt, "the ſervants of Odin have foretold to me the fate of my throne. Their words were dark, but I am eaſy; for 'tis the tyrant only who can fear futurity. Do thou foretel to me the fate of my heart, which is to me of no leſs value. But let thy words be clear as light, for every lover fears futurity."

The hoary Prieſt, with reverence, bent his knee, and proceeded to invoke the Deity of the Temple. The flame mounted from the altar, and Swend's heart, clear and chaſte, towards heaven.—The Prieſt returned with ſolemn aſpect; a cloud hung upon his brow, but mortal eye could not diſtinguiſh whether ſome baleful planet, or the ſun of hope was hid

hid beneath this cloud. After a ſhort, but awful pauſe, he ſpoke:

"Beloved of the Gods and of thy people, a good Prince finds his reward in the arms of a Valkyrie (13)."

"'Tis ſhe! 'tis ſhe!" cried the enraptured Monarch. "To what mortal female in my realms could Louna give a title more than mortal? To her alone! To Ildegerte! I thank thee, reverend old man. Soon ſhalt thou hear from me—ſoon ſhall the ſteps of this your temple groan beneath the weight of gifts which I will heap upon your altars. Farewell! Give me thy hand. Farewell! Pray for me!"

"Prince," ſtammered the Prieſt; ſhaking his ſilver locks with warning mien."——

But

But Swend no longer heard him. Swend flew through the wood, ſurpaſſed in ſpeed by nothing but his thoughts. The form of Ildegerte ſwam before his ſight. The name of Ildegerte floated on his lips. His ſweet interpretation of the deluſive oracle ſeemed to him the only one within the ſcope of poſſibility. Panting, he arrived at the gates of his caſtle, and ordered his ſwifteſt ſteed to be prepared. In glowing colours Fancy painted the delight of a firſt meeting, after the ſeparation of a year; but the war-like trumpet ſoon awoke him from his viſionary bliſs.

"Yes," cried Tott, the chief of all his troops, "prepare thy ſwifteſt ſteed, collect thy Knights and warriors, and march againſt the traitor Canfried. Seeſt thou that weeping

ing multitude of fugitives, which increaſes every moment? One left his houſe in flames; another ſaw his wife defiled; a third fled over his ravaged fields; a fourth beheld the murder of his helpleſs father! With a troop of banditti, Canfried is ſpreading deſolation through thy territories.—Yes! prepare thy ſwifteſt ſteed; aſſemble the valiant Norwegians. Away againſt the villain! Let him feel that the blood of thy anceſtors flows in thy veins, that the arms of thy Knights are firmly nerved, and that old Tott is ſtill alive."

Like a man who wakes from golden dreams by the ſtab of an aſſaſſin, Swend ſtarted at this dreadful news; but a ſingle glance towards his wretched ſubjects ſubdued the lover, and called forth the hero.

He

He diſpatched expreſſes to his faithful Knights throughout the land. From every quarter they crowded with their hardy trains of well-armed vaſſals. With beating heart, Swend in a few days beheld, beneath his caſtle's walls, a numerous army, and at their head the dauntleſs Tott.

"I go to relieve my ſubjects," whiſpered the powerful voice of valour in the Prince's breaſt, "their miſery and groans demand my help. Silent be the milder voice of love, till I can lay the laurels, and my people's gratitude at Ildegerte's feet."

Clad in his burniſhed armour, the young hero preſſed his charger; at his ſide rode the intrepid Tott. The warriors ſtruck their ſhields; the Scalds ſung ſolemn hymns; the

the army marched. Old men, women, and children, were aſſembled on the road. They bleſſed their Ruler, who ſaluted all with friendly air; and, with uplifted eyes and hands, they ſued the Gods for victory and life.—Thus went the warriors thirſting for battle and revenge. Succeeding meſſengers, who brought accounts of accumulated rapine and murder, blew every Norwegian's heart into a raging blaze.

The hoſtile armies were now ſeparated but by half a day's march, when Swend convened the chiefs and leaders of the people, and ſtanding on a riſing ground, he thus addreſſed them with the fire of youth:

"My brave and faithful countrymen, be to-morrow the deciſive day. Let ſacrifice

be offered at the altar of Odin, that he may grant us victory—the victory of juſt revenge. Advance with your troops, under cover of the night, againſt this murderer and robber, that at break of day, the ſword of my people may ſend the plunderer, while he ſleeps, into the arms of Hela (14)."

"Not ſo," replied the cool experienced Tott; "let us act honourably, and according to the laws of war—let us ſend a herald to the Swediſh camp, to learn the cauſe of this attack. If Canfried require what is juſt, and he be willing to repair the calamities occaſioned by this inroad, then chuſe, Oh King! the palm of peace, and ſheath the murderous ſword."

"Require!"

"Require!" exclaimed Swend, "what can he require?—Repair! what can he repair?—Is he a God, that he can re-animate my faithful ſubjects?"

"Alas, no!" returned Tott, "the dead are dead;—never have our eyes again beheld the mortal who had left this earth. But ſtill live the orphan children of the ſlain—ſtill ſighs many a widow, far from the habitation of her ſlaughtered huſband. To theſe let Canfried open his treaſures, and repay them trebly for the bloody booty."

"What!" cried Swend, with generous heat, "ſhall I take payment for my people's blood?—Never!—Canfried's kingdom ſhall not buy a drop from the meaneſt of my ſubjects."

"Juſt and true, if that blood were yet unſhed," replied the old General; "falſe and wrong if it be already ſhed.—Or wilt thou lead thy troops to death without neceſſity?—Thou haſt loſt hundreds, perhaps will ſacrifice thouſands."

"Enough!" anſwered the young King, "be it according to thy wiſh. I revere thy counſel as the counſel of a father."

In conſequence of this determination, ſoon as the morning dawned, a herald came to Canfreid's tent, and demanded admittance to the King. Through rows of ſcoffing guards he was conducted to the tyrant's ſeat; who, ſurrounded by arms, ſeemed to read treachery in every eye, and, in the midſt of his ſubjects, trembled at the ruſtling of a withered leaf.

"Speak;

"Speak; what wouldſt thou here?" ſaid he tothe herald.

"Hear me, Canfried, King of Sweden. Through me ſpeaks Swend, the mighty King of Norway. Why haſt thou fallen on me, like a robber on the ſleeping traveller?—Why haſt thou ſlain my ſubjects, and laid waſte my realms?—Why haſt thou infringed upon the rights of nations, and not honourably declared war againſt me?—Behold! the blood of my ſubjects cries to me for vengeance. I am approaching with my warriors, and Odin will chaſtiſe thee by my arm. But if t ou, like an honourable King and Knight, will declare unto me the cauſe of this attack, rebuild the habitations of my ſubjects, ſilence the complaints of the widows and orphans thou haſt made, then will I con-

vene my chiefs and leaders, ſtate thy demand ingenuouſly to them, and, if ſuch be found juſt and proper, by my royal word will I grant it. But, if thou refuſe this offer, let Odin judge between me and thee. The groans of the dying, and blood of the ſlain be upon thy head!"

The herald ceaſed. Canfried, contracting his briſtly eye-brows, darted a threatening look at him, and thus replied:

"Go, tell the ſtripling Swend, that Canfried, King of Sweden, Lord of a mighty empire, at which the whole North trembles, has more than a ſufficiency of land and gold; that he requires not from the Prince of Norway even a ſpan of earth; that his royal clemency is willing to atone for the calamities

mities occaſioned by his warriors on one condition—The poſſeſſion of Ildegerte was the only motive of my uſing arms; let Swend, within three days, reſign her to my royal bed, and theſe threatening troops ſhall quit his borders. If not, with ſword in hand will Canfried force his way through the Norwegian ranks."

Beneath an aged oak the King was ſitting at the feet of Tott, catching each inſtructive word that dropped from the lips of the experienced Chief. The herald came into his preſence, and, not without trembling, delivered to him Canfried's haughty anſwer. Scarce had he ended, when Swend ſprung up, and gnaſhed his teeth. Old Tott remained calmly in his place.

"Sooner ſhall the ſtone float on the water's ſurface," cried the King, "ſooner ſhall the ſtream return to its ſource, than I accept this ignominious condition."

"Not ſo haſty, young man," anſwered Tott, "let us coolly examine this propoſal; let us properly place in competition what thou wilt loſe with what thou mayſt loſe: Thou wilt loſe a girl—thou mayſt loſe a kingdom."

"But this girl was the favourite of my mother," rejoined Swend.

"Bleſſings be upon thee, for thus reverſing the memory of thy mother," ſaid the Chief; "but even Thora herſelf would have ſacrificed

ſacrificed her favourite for the welfare of her people."

"And ſhall I then," cried the Prince, "make Ildegerte miſerable? Shall I deliver her, who never injured me, into the arms of a barbarian—her, for whom each Knight would draw his ſword with pleaſure? Never, never!"

"But is it then ſo ſure," demanded Tott, "that Ildegerte will be miſerable? How many women have, by gentleneſs and wiſdom, transformed blood-thirſty tigers into men? Has not Ildegerte ſufficient talents and perfections to change this libertine, this enemy of Norway, to a loving huſband, and thy country's ſtaunch ally?"

"And is not our defeat," reſumed the King, "as doubtful as that Ildegerte will be happy in the arms of Canfried?—I miſtake thee, Tott; thou art at the head of a powerful army—thou art required to fight in the cauſe of juſtice, and thou feareſt to do it."

"Ah! young man," anſwered the hoary warrior, with a ſmile, "when thou art hereafter tranſported to Valhall—when thy father and mother come to meet thee, let them bear teſtimony whether fear was ever known by Tott. No!—Thrice on theſe borders have I led to victory the warriors of Norway. When I returned triumphant from the laſt, I put into thy hands the laurel-crown, beſtowed upon me by thy father, and thou playd'ſt with it in thy cradle.—Thy father ſhook my

hand, and ſaid, 'Dear Tott'—methinks I ſtill can hear him—'ſhould Odin ſummon me before my ſon arrives at manhood, let thy ſword be uſed for him, as it has been for me; but teach him, one muſt never fight, unleſs for a better purpoſe than to be able thus to play with laurels."

"Forgive me, dear old man," exclaimed Swend, "but thou miſtakeſt me in thy turn. May Vara (15) puniſh me, if mad ambition fires my ſoul!—But infamous it ſeems to me, to buy a peace at ſuch a price—infamous to make ſuch a propoſal to Ildegerte."

"The latter I will undertake," replied Tott.

Swend ſtarted, but the Chief continued—

"I know Ildegerte's exalted ſentiments: ſhe is always more than woman—often more than man. Her father was my friend, and the companion of my youth;—he fell in battle at my ſide, and his laſt breath recommended Ildegerte to my care. I have obeyed him, and ſhe well deſerves it. In her dwells the ſpirit of her father. Joy will ſparkle in her eye when I inform her that the ſacrifice for which ſhe is ſelected, will ſave the lives of many thouſands—perhaps too the life of her King."

Here he roſe.

"I haſten to her. Meanwhile conclude with Canfried a truce of ſix days; before the

the expiration of which, I ſhall bring Ildegerte to the camp."

He attempted to go, when Swend, in violent agitation, held him.

"One moment more, dear Tott—only a ſingle moment!—And doſt thou really think that—that——?"

"I think," anſwered the old man, ſurveying him with great aſtoniſhment, "I think I do not underſtand thee, and am aſhamed to ſee thee tremble."

"Oh my friend and father!" exclaimed Swend, throwing himſelf into the arms of Tott, "I love Ildegerte!"

A pauſe

A pauſe enſued.

"Indeed!" ſaid the old man, "now I comprehend all this—now all is plain enough. Now too I forgive the accuſation againſt me. Thou loveſt Ildegerte! And what doſt thou intend to make her?"

"Can Tott aſk ſuch a queſtion?" demanded Swend, with dignity.

"Thy wife then!" replied the Chief, ſhaking his hoary head. "Young man, young man, I cannot approve of this. But to convince a lover, is more than to gain three victories. I am mute. Come, let us away to battle."

"Yes, to battle, to battle!" cried Swend. "To fight at thy ſide is but paſtime."

They

They went. The young King flew from tent to tent, embraced each Knight, ſhook each vaſſal by the hand, ſhot fire into each boſom from his eyes, and inſpired the whole army with his youthful ardour. In a few minutes the ſhouts of battle echoed through the camp. The King was followed by old Tott, who earneſtly ſurveyed the field of battle ſtretched before him, and pointed out to every Knight the poſt which he was but to quit as conqueror or corpſe. Amid the clamour of the troops, through which the war-hymns of the Scalds were ſcarcely audible, Swend ſaw, in every poliſhed ſhield, the form of Ildegerte. Amid the wild tumultuous ſhouts he could hear nothing but the liſping voice of Ildegerte. Retired within his tent, he threw himſelf upon a couch, and thus gave vent to his feelings—

" To

"To riſk my life and throne for Ildegerte—to loſe my life and throne for Ildegerte, is a thought devoid of bitterneſs. But if Odin has reſolved to ſpare the villain for a longer trial—if Fate has fixed on me, as an example, that the cauſe of juſtice does not always conquer; if, inſtead of flying into Ildegerte's arms, I may to-morrow fly into my parent's arms, who will then declare what Swend has done for her—for her, who little fancies what a ſacrifice I am about to offer, who perhaps has never read the avowal of my paſſion in my eyes?—Contented I will die, if ſure I am lamented by her. She ſhall know the ſecret, which, till to-day, has been concealed within my breaſt; and then, to Odin I commit the guidance of my days. I ſhall bear with me the certainty of Ildegerte's regret to the bliſsful habitations

of

of Valhall. He ſpoke; ſeized the parchment, and wrote:

" *Swend, King of Norway, to Ildegerte.*

" Can you, dear companion of my youth, ſtill recollect thoſe bleſſed days of innocence and joy, when, under Thora's eye, each evening ſeemed to come too ſoon?—Does your tongue ſtill ſometimes liſp the name of brother, with which I ſo often was enraptured? Do you ſtill bear in mind the ſacred bleſſing beſtowed upon us by my mother when ſhe left this world? If you have yet ſome faint remembrance of thoſe happy days, paſſed in fraternal intercourſe, when I concealed no ſecret from you—then, cenſure me that I have hid within my boſom, for whole months, wiſhes and hopes which

even

"To riſk my life and throne for Ildegerte—to loſe my life and throne for Ildegerte, is a thought devoid of bitterneſs. But if Odin has reſolved to ſpare the villain for a longer trial—if Fate has fixed on me, as an example, that the cauſe of juſtice does not always conquer; if, inſtead of flying into Ildegerte's arms, I may to-morrow fly into my parent's arms, who will then declare what Swend has done for her—for her, who little fancies what a ſacrifice I am about to offer, who perhaps has never read the avowal of my paſſion in my eyes?—Contented I will die, if ſure I am lamented by her. She ſhall know the ſecret, which, till to-day, has been concealed within my breaſt; and then, to Odin I commit the guidance of my days. I ſhall bear with me the certainty of Ildegerte's regret to the bliſsful habitations

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even

even at this inſtant, cauſe my hand to tremble, and my cheek to glow, as if Thora's ſon could harbour a diſhonourable thought. I have ſacrificed in Louna's temple—that is my ſecret. The poſſeſſion of Ildegerte—that is the ſum of all my hopes and wiſhes. To rob me of you, Canfried has invaded Norway with a powerful army. The fatal hour approaches which is to decide between his cauſe and mine. If Love and Fortune be propitious to my arms, Swend, in a few days, will lay his crown at Ildegerte's feet, and Ildegerte will complete the bleſſing which my mother gave us as ſhe died. But, if my rival triumph (and the firſt moment of his triumph muſt be the laſt of my exiſtence), then, Ildegerte, drop a tear upon my early grave; lament the loſs of a brother—of a huſband."

After

After he had ſealed this letter with the button of his ſword, he gave it to a truſty meſſenger, whom his longing eye ſtill followed till he vaniſhed among the intercepting mountains.

He returned with lighter heart into his tent. His attendants came to arm him. With delight he gazed upon the burniſhed harneſs which, ere long, was to be ſullied with the blood of his enemy, or with his own. He thought the iron helmet eaſier than before; the corſlet far leſs cumberſome. He vaulted on his charger, and flew with naked ſword to the head of his army. The troops received him with a joyful ſhout.

"A blue plume," whiſpered one to another, "let us not loſe ſight of him. 'Tis the

the young hero's firſt campaign, and his fiery looks declare his eagerneſs. Haſte hither, old experienced Knights, and gather round him."

And now thirty or forty of the braveſt warriors encircled the King. Each breaſt was another buckler to him; and this ſmall determined troop more valuable far than all the paltry guards around the throne of Canfried. Old Tott brandiſhed his glittering ſword above his head with youthful ſtrength, and hark! The trumpet's warlike clangor ſtruck the ear from each end of the troops. The Scalds chaunted ſolemn hymns; the Knights cloſed their viſors; the arms of the vaſſals claſhed; the chargers ſtamped; the enſigns floated in the air; the heart of the young King beat high.

"Why

"Why delay?" cried he to the deliberate Chief. "Forward, ſwift as lightning! See! the nervous arms o my Knights are ſcarcely able to reſtrain their neighing ſteeds."

"We delay to conquer," anſwered Tott; "let this firſt flame ſubſide which burns ſo high, yet ſpreads but little ruin round it."

Slow and determined, like a dark cloud which bears the vengeful lightning in its breaſt, he marched againſt the trembling foe.

Uffo, Tott's valiant ſon (who had already ſhared in many a fight the glory of his father), led a choſen troop of warriors through the valley, and waited for the ſignal of attack;

attack, that he might fall upon the enemy when leaſt expected, and ſtrike the daſtard hirelings with diſmay.

Canfried, meanwhile, attended by his Knights, flew from one wing of his army to the other, bellowing to each that he ſhould recollect his duty, and endeavouring to revive the drooping courage of his followers by the hope of plunder.

But what can ſervile avarice avail againſt the arm which is fighting for its native land? Already had the ſword of the Norwegians forced a paſſage through the Swediſh ranks; already had Tott ſpread deſolation round him; already had Swend burſt into the throng, and piled a mountain of his ſlaughtered foes upon the plain; already was

Uffo's

Uffo's armour ſprinkled with Swediſh gore; already the groans of the dying mounted towards heaven. Canfried ſaw, trembled, and gnaſhed his teeth. In vain did he roar till he was hoarſe, to rally the retreating cowards. In vain did he curſe the hour of his birth, Odin, and the habitation of the Gods. Almoſt inevitably loſt, Deſpair added vigour to his arm, and hovered above him with her ſooty wings. Impetuous he ruſhed into the thickeſt troops of the Norwegians, followed by a ſquadron of raſh daring youths; they hewed their way with the deſtructive ſword, until they reached the place where Swend's blue plume high nodded in the air.

"Art thou here," cried Canfried, in a voice of thunder, "thou cradle-warrior, who

who haſt dared to match thyſelf with me? Advance, thou fiery ſtripling, nor crouch inglorious thus beneath the bucklers of thy Knights! Advance, and meet a man!"

"Welcome! welcome," cried Swend, "thou whom in the heat of battle I ſo long have ſought. Hither, thou raviſher! The ſtripling ſhall chaſtiſe thee."

He looſed the reins, and ruſhed towards Canfreid; but his ſtaunch companions (who had averted many a dangerous blow, and whoſe number was now much decreaſed) threw themſelves between the combatants, and cried—

"No, you ſhall not ſtake your life againſt a villain's, who diſgraces his own crown, and

and wiſhes to ſteal your's. He is no more a Knight. Call one of our baggage-boys, that he may fell him with a tent-ſtaff to the earth."

Foaming with fury, Canfried bellowed to the remnant of his army—

"Advance! advance! Revenge this inſult offered to your King."

At theſe words, a confuſed multitude, conſiſting of ſome hundreds, fell on the twenty valiant Knights, whoſe breaſts were as a wall to their Monarch. Not one gave way—not one fell, without taking five of his enemies to ſerve him in Valhall (16). But now the mob, which ſtill increaſed and fought with blind deſpair, had ſlain the laſt, and

Swend remained alone, at a diſtance from his army, whither his youthful intrepidity had led him.

" Yield, yield," cried Canfried, " that I may yoke thee to my chariot, and thus triumphantly proceed to Ildegerte's caſtle."

Swend's ſword made his reply. Canfried with great agility eluded the attack, and aimed a mighty ſtroke at his antagoniſt, which glided down his poliſhed armour. A furious combat now began between the tyrant of Sweden and the father of Norway. The youths in Canfried's retinue ruſhed againſt the ſolitary King, to drag him from his charger; but two old Knights, the only two in whom the honour of their order ſtill remained, threatened to ſlay the firſt who

dared

dared to lay hands upon him. They formed a circle round the combatants, caſt a furious look upon their daſtard countrymen, and maintained the laws of war.

Like lightning flamed the ſwords of the contending rivals. Ildegerte and a kingdom were to be the victor's prize. Canfried ſaw both; Swend, Ildegerte only. The combat long continued doubtful, for ſkill and courage fought againſt deſpair and madneſs. But now, as Canfried raiſed his ſword, in order to conclude the conteſt by one deadly blow, Swend perceived an opening where the armlets faſten to the corſlet. He dexterouſly parried the deſcending ſtroke, and in a moment would his ſword have forced a paſſage to the tyrant's heart, when a vile aſſaſſin from behind ſtruck him with a mace

upon the head. He fell prone from his horſe, and ſtreams of blood came guſhing from his throat. One of the old Swediſh Knights ſlew the villain on the ſpot, bent down to Swend, and opened his viſor. His features ſwam in blood—his eye was broken.

"A good Prince finds his reward in the arms of a Valkyrie."

Theſe were the laſt words he uttered through his ſighs. He was laid acroſs his ſteed, and ſlowly taken from the field of battle; but ere he reached the neighbouring ſpring, at which the Knight had purpoſed to refreſh him, he expired.

"Swend is dead!" cried Canfried to his troops. "The day is our's. Back to the battle!"

"Swend

"Swend is dead!" exclaimed the flying army, and returned.

"Swend is dead!" was heard on every ſide. "With him fell the courage of the Norwegians."

Alas! too true!

"Swend is dead!" whiſpered each vaſſal to his comrade; "vaniſhed is the plume which nodded at our head."

"Swend is dead!" ſaid each Knight to his neighbour.

The dire intelligence ſoon reached the old intrepid Tott, who ſtill was ſpreading carnage through the plain.

"Follow me, children," ſaid he, with utterance half-choaked, "avenge the death of your King and benefactor."

But in vain did he once more ruſh into the heat of battle; but a few hundreds followed him. Horror and grief had overpowered the almoſt conquering army. The Norwegians fled in wild diſorder from the field, and thouſands fell a prey to the devouring ſwords of their purſuers. Tott, with only a ſmall, but valiant band, retreated to a hill, and there maintained his poſt againſt the united force of Sweden.

"Where is Uffo, my ſon?" ſaid he to the Knight ſtanding neareſt to him. "Is my ſon Uffo too among the fugitives?"

"No,

"No, venerable Chief," replied the warrior, "he fell, covered with wounds, amid the fight."

"Didſt thou ſee him?" demanded Tott; "Were his wounds in front?"

"All in his breaſt, and on his head," returned the Knight.

"Odin be praiſed!" exclaimed old Tott. "Let us fight to-day; to-morrow we will mourn."

He ſpoke, and opened his viſor to regain his breath, when lo! a fatal arrow came hiſſing through the air, pierced his right eye, and tumbled the laſt prop of Norway to the earth. A faint groan from all his followers

accompanied the hero's fall. The ſword dropped from every feeble hand, and every arm ſunk impotently down. Yet none would be obliged to the victorious robber for his life, and Canfried towered the plain with carcaſes.

FLY

FLY, my ſpirit, far, far from the fatal plains, drenched in the blood of heroes!—Why ſhouldſt thou tarry with the dead?—No longer great and valiant deeds can ſignalize the field, for Tott, and Swend, and Uffo are no more. Lead me, ſoft Fancy, lead me to the ſilent bower, where, in the ſhadowy twilight, Ildegerte received the meſſenger who came to announce to her the King's attachment.

"Art thou a meſſenger of peace?" cried ſhe haſtily, as he approached, and knelt with reverence before her.

" From the King's hand I have received this letter," anſwered he, " with orders to deliver it to Ildegerte."

" Tell me," demanded ſhe, " how didſt thou leave the camp ? Is Canfried's band of robbers vanquiſhed ? Has Odin chaſtiſed the traitor ?"

" When I left the camp," replied the meſſenger, " the Scalds were chaunting hymns ; the Knights were cloſing their viſors ; the armour was claſhing ; the enſigns were flying, and the trumpet's blaſt proclaimed the attack."

" Oh ! then is our King perhaps already victorious," exclaimed ſhe, " and with the pangs

pangs of unſucceſsful villany, Canfried has retreated from our borders."

With theſe words ſhe opened the letter. She read—her cheek coloured. She read further—her cheek glowed. She cloſed the letter, and a tear trembled in her ſparkling eye.

"Leave me," ſaid ſhe, in a friendly tone, to the meſſenger.

"Moſt willingly, fair lady," anſwered he; "but do not long delay your anſwer, for the King awaits me with anxiety."

"With anxiety!" repeated ſhe, bluſhing. "How doſt thou know that?"

"Oh! he commanded me a hundred times," returned the meſſenger, "to outſtrip the wind in ſpeed. He ſaid the meſſage was of conſequence, and every minute dear to him. Nay, after I was mounted and had left the camp, I ſtill could hear his voice deſiring me to haſten; and when I looked far behind me from the dale, I ſpied him ſtanding near his tent, and with his hand above his eyes, ſtill watching me."

"Enough! enough!" ſaid Ildegerte, much affected, "go, feed thy horſe, refreſh thyſelf;—to-morrow, ſoon as the ſun's firſt beams have tipped the hills, thou mayſt return to the camp.

The meſſenger went. Ildegerte ſunk upon her knees, and prayed—

"Oh

" Oh Thora! now immortal, who, when about to quit mortality, didſt call me daughter; if, amid the joys of Vingolf, thou ſtill canſt feel a happy mother's joys—if the name of Swend remain ſtill dear to thee, Oh reveal thyſelf to Ildegerte! If I be unworthy of thy ſon's bed, baniſh from my heart this growing paſſion. Let me fly into ſome deſert, and lament my fate, which made me not the daughter of a King."

She ceaſed, and with eyes ſwimming in tears, ſurveyed the riſing moon. Hark! a gentle evening breeze ſwept through the leaves; the bloſſoms ſhed their odours all around; the nightingale warbled in plaintive ſolitary notes. Ildegerte's heart was full. The ſolemn twilight filled her mind with dark preſages. With wild affrighted looks

ſhe

ſhe haſtened through the wood, and hid herſelf in the moſt loneſome chamber of the caſtle.

Meanwhile the prating meſſenger had been relating to the curious females, who ſurrounded him, all that he knew about the letter—or knew not; all that Swend had ſaid to him—or not ſaid. He had increaſed the King's anxiety a hundred fold; a hundred times repeated Swend's eagerneſs for his return, and at laſt, with all the air of wiſdom, he obſerved—

"It muſt be ſome great project of the King which my weak intellects cannot diſcover; but perhaps Ildegerte may give you further information."

Heavens!

Heavens! what buſtle, and what whiſpers now took place! At length the fair aſſembly agreed that they knew nothing, and reſolved that at ſupper the ſecret ſhould be drawn from Ildegerte; or that, if her ſilence was invincible, they ſhould at leaſt read it in her countenance.

The wiſhed-for hour arrived. All eyes were turned on Ildegerte, as ſhe entered the ſaloon, with her uſual air of friendly majeſty. She was recovered; the gentle glow of hope ſhone on her dimpled cheek. They ſat to table. All was ſilence;—all was liſtening expectation, while Ildegerte (not remarking this ſilence, or this expectation) talked with indifference to all. One coughed; another trod upon her neighbour's foot; a third winked to a fourth, and none dared

to ſpeak. But towards the concluſion of the meal, Ildegerte addreſſed them, and every hand, about to lift the morſel to the mouth, ſunk motionleſs upon the lap.

"You, my dear companions, have, in this caſtle, for many months with me lamented Thora. I hope I am beloved by you, and hope that I deſerve your love.—Hear then the joyful meſſage which our King has ſent to me, ſo undeſerving of it: his choice has fixed on me to be his wife!"

She ceaſed, and, ſoftly bluſhing, caſt her eyes upon the earth. Aſtoniſhment had chained the tongues of her companions; but ſoon they roſe tranſported, ſurrounded Ildegerte with careſſes, and paid homage to their Queen.

It

It muſt be owned that here and there an envious glance was ſeen, but Ildegerte underſtood that art ſo difficult to be acquired, of always maintaining a ſerenity of temper; and thus her ſilent dignity and friendly look ſubdued the proudeſt heart. During the firſt hours devoted to reſt, not one of all the damſels cloſed her weary eyes; each imagination was ſo full of all the events by which this laſt was cauſed, that it ſpurned the hand of Sleep when it ſeemed to offer the balſam of repoſe.

Twas well for you, good ſouls! For why this ſhort repoſe? Already do the ſhrieks of horror rend the air, and draw full near your caſtle-gates: already do the groans diſturb the midnight ſilence: already does the cry of murder echo through the wood. The

dwarf

dwarf upon the tower thrice blew his horn. The guards rouſed themſelves from ſleep, and haſtened to the portal, againſt which the approaching wretches thundered.

"Who thus diſturbs our nightly reſt?"

"Open! open to your brethren!"

"Speak! who are you?"

"Conquered wounded fugitives."

"Whence come you through the darkneſs of the night?"

"From the field of battle. We have marked the path by which we came with the blood that trickles from our wounds.—Odin,

Odin, Odin has pronounced deſtruction on the land! Swend is dead, Uffo is fallen, Tott is in Valhall!"

"Deſtruction, deſtruction upon you, ye meſſengers of evil!"

All was confuſion through the caſtle. Queſtions, ſhrieks, and cries for arms were heard on every ſide. Ildegerte alone was calmly ſleeping in the arms of Hope. The gentle ſmile of rewarded virtue dimpled her virgin cheek. Her companions, with diſhevelled hair, now burſt into the chamber.

"Awake! awake!" cried they, "thy ſleep is death."

Ildegerte ſprung affrighted from her couch.

"What

" What has happened? Is the caſtle in flames? Or has ſome traitor opened our gates to the enemy?"

In vain did ſhe a hundred times repeat the queſtion. Horror had robbed the females of their ſenſes; they could make no reply but by weeping, groaning, and tearing their hair. Ildegerte therefore threw a garment round her, ſeized a taper, and with winged footſteps traverſed the vaulted galleries, through which the diſtant cries aſſailed her ear. Now her foot ſtruck againſt a corpſe, and now her wandering eye eſpied upon the floor a wounded man, who held with both his hands his bleeding ſide, and ſeemed already ſeized by Hela.

" Who

"Who art thou?" cried Ildegerte, ſhuddering.

"One who fights with Death for Valhall's joys," ſaid he.

"How cameſt thou here?" demanded ſhe. "What hand inflicted this deadly wound?"

"The hand of a Swede," anſwered he. "Swend is dead, Uffo is fallen, Tott is in Valhall!"

"Avenging Gods!" ſtammered forth Ildegerte.

The taper dropped from her hand, and ſhe ſunk, devoid of ſtrength, againſt the wall. But ſoon her fleeting ſpirits were re-

called

called by the groans of the dying warrior. She crept to her chamber, ſecured the entrance, and threw herſelf upon the floor. There long ſhe laid, nor ſhed a ſingle tear, nor heaved a ſingle ſigh. This moment of dreadful ſtupefaction paſſed away. She drew Swend's letter from her boſom, and her eye fell upon theſe words:

"Then, Ildegerte, drop a tear upon my early grave; lament the loſs of a brother—of a huſband."

A ſudden flood of tears came to her relief.

"My brother! my huſband!" cried ſhe, in a voice half choaked by ſobs.

No

No more could ſhe ſtammer forth; but in theſe two names her overflowing heart combined all the ſhadows of her paſt happineſs with all the ſmiling proſpects of her future bliſs, which Fancy, a few hours before, had painted to her.

Overpowered by anguiſh, and almoſt drowned in tears, laid Ildegerte, till the ruddy morn coloured the caſtle's turrets. She awoke from the frenzy of deſpair, juſt as the riſing ſun caſt his firſt beams upon the lance and ſword, which, ſince Thora's death, had ruſted in a loneſome corner.

"Come forth, my arms," cried ſhe, "as yet employed but in the ſports of youth—come forth, and in my hands become the inſtrument of burning vengeance. Inſpire me,

me, Thor, (17) with martial ardour; make the din of arms more pleaſing to my ear than the lute's harmonious tones. Pour ſtrength into my frame, and let no female fears unnerve it. Depart from me, Frey, (18) thou ſon of Niord (19). Steel my breaſt, Oh father of the Gods! and thou, Freya, to whom this heart has offered many a ſacrifice, Oh! let thy Lyna (20) guide me ſafe through danger, till the inhuman tyrant Canfried ſcoffing ſtands before me, that the arm of a woman may hurl him to the everlaſting torments of Niflheim (21).—Haſte, ye Scalds, and chaunt the hymns of war. I fight for my brother—for my huſband!"

Deep crimſon coloured Ildegerte's cheeks; her eyes ſhot fire; her arm trembled, not with female fear, but manly rage. She in-

cloſed

cloſed her ſilken locks within her creſted helm (adorned, by Thora's hand, with three ſerpents' heads), locked her ſtruggling boſom in the plated cuiraſs, girded the ſword to her loins, graſped the lance and buckler, and entered the vaulted hall, where, with downcaſt looks, her companions, bewailing the paſt, and trembling for the future, ſhrieked and tore their boſoms.

"Why all theſe cries and lamentations?" ſaid Ildegerte. "He is dead. Your tears will not recal him from the clay-cold arms of Hela. Your tears will not repel the robber from the gates of our late peaceful habitation. Was it then in vain that Thora ſnatched the ſpindle from our hand, and taught us manly exerciſe?—Let thoſe women weep and ſigh, whoſe only arms are

tears and ſighs. Let thoſe daſtards tremble who would not ſell their lives for Valhall's joys.—Riſe, my companions! Is there a choice between death and ignominy? Why do we delay? Haſte againſt the robber, who threatens the deſtruction of our innocence. Haſte, haſte againſt the murderer, who has robbed me of my brother—of my huſband. Let him feel that the heroiſm of the ſons of Norway dwells likewiſe in her daughters. Let him feel that the arm of a woman was not formed only to place her ſuckling to her breaſt. Riſe! Riſe! Redeem the honour of your native land. Revenge your Monarch's death. Conquer, or die with Ildegerte!"

Here grief and fury in contention choked her voice; but the heroine's words ſunk

deep into the hearts of her liſtening friends. They gazed with reverence at her flaming eye.

Ildegerte leaned exhauſted on her lance, and ſolemn ſilence reigned. At this moment an old Knight, ſeverely wounded, and ſupported by two 'Squires, ſlowly entered the hall. In his hand he bore a helmet with a blue plume. Silent, and with his mournful eye riveted upon it, he approached Ildegerte. A ſecret tremor chilled her blood.

"Ah!" cried ſhe, "'tis Swend's helmet."

"Yes," replied the Knight, "it is indeed Swend's helmet. The blood that cleaves to this plume, is the blood of my

King. This helmet coſts me my life. I have fought honourably for it, and 'tis all that I could bring. Doſt thou ſee this mark? There a villain ſtruck him from behind. The daſtard! From behind!"

Ildegerte ſwooned.

"Ceaſe! ceaſe!" cried the females, and ſurrounded her. The old Knight ſeated himſelf, laid the helmet down before him, gazed at it with his hands claſped, and, regardleſs of the cries around him, thus proceeded—

"Yes! the aſſaſſin ſtruck thee from behind. Thou wert a brave youth. Still do I ſee this plume towering amid the throng, while the wanton winds were playing with it; but

but now it droops, wet with thy royal blood. The barbarous deed calls loudly for revenge, but in vain does thy departed ſpirit ſearch for an avenger. Uffo fell with his troop. Tott has ſhed the blood, warmed only by the love of his country. The murderous ſword has ſwept our warriors from the earth. Me, me only has Odin for a few moments ſpared, that I might ſecure this treaſure, and require ſome one to ſwear on this cold hand the moſt terrible of oaths; that I might, by this helmet, appoint him an avenger; that I might carry his oath to Valhall, and deliver it to Swend. But my ſtrength declines, my eye fades. Haſte! haſte, avengers, ere I die!"—He looked around. Ildegerte was recovered. In a moaning voice, the Knight again began—

"Has the angel of death not ſpared one —not one youth (had he but juſt eſcaped the rod), that this cold hand might once more draw the bloody ſword to make a Knight?—Haſte! haſte, avengers, ere I die!"

"Make me, make me the avenger, venerable old man!" cried Ildegerte, claſping his knees with ardour, and throwing her own helmet from her. "To me give Swend's helmet, that on my head it may become a terror to the enemy; that the ſight of it may make the blood of Canfried ſtagnant; that this ſword may force it into circulation, and with it waſh the gore of my Monarch from this drooping plume."

"Is

"Is Norway then ſo far humbled," ſaid the dying Knight, "that her liberty and honour can only be defended by a woman's helpleſs arm?—Oh, father of the Gods! haſt thou then lengthened out my days—haſt thou allowed theſe eyes to be yet a little longer open, only that they may ſee the ſtorm tear up by the roots that tree, in whoſe ſhadow I have reſted eighty years, on whoſe branches I have hung many a well-earned trophy. Never have I wept but in my mother's arms—thoſe were the tears of a child; but to-day, in my old age, am I doomed to waſh theſe grey hairs in the tears of deſpair. Bear me into the open air, and let me die."

"Stay, I conjure thee, by the honour of thy order," exclaimed Ildegerte. "Thou

deſpiſeſt the courage of a female, and ſcornſt a woman's helpleſs arm. Know then, old man, that ſhe whom Swend had choſen for his wife, is not unworty to be his avenger. If the miſt of death has not yet dimmed thy eye, peruſe this letter. I am thy Queen. Thy Queen claſps thy knees, and with burning tears implores thee to make her the avenger of her huſband."

The old Knight took the letter with a trembling hand. His eye examined it with difficulty, line by line, and at laſt reached the word Huſband.

" Be it ſo," cried he, much agitated, " I acknowledge thee my Queen before I die. Fear not theſe clay-cold lips. Kiſs me, that I may take thy kiſs to the holy habitations

habitations of happineſs, where, in the court of warriors, your huſband wanders under Odin's golden bucklers (22)."

Ildegerte preſſed her glowing mouth to the pallid lips of the expiring warrior—

"Take this kiſs," exclaimed ſhe, "to my huſband, and with it the ſolemn oath to revenge his death, or to die worthy of his love."

"Swear then," ſaid the Knight.

"I ſwear," replied Ildegerte.

He drew his ſword.

"Lay thy hand," proceeded he, "upon this ſword—the eye of the Omnipotent beholds us. Repeat my words—the ear of the Omnipotent hears us. With fire and ſword I ſwear to avenge the death of Swend, King of Norway. May the marrow dry within my bones, and may my hand be withered, if I ſheath the ſword before my vengeance be complete! With fire and ſword I ſwear to purſue Canfried, the murderer of my huſband. If I break this oath, may my name become the deriſion of children! May no tomb cover my bones, no tear fall upon my corpſe! May it lie unburied on the earth, a prey to ravenous vultures, and may every honeſt man paſs by it with a curſe! Curſed be the hour of my birth! Curſed be the hour of my death! Curſed be the bones of my father! Curſed be the bones

bones of my mother! May the name of Ildegerte be branded with a harlot's infamy for ever! May the curſe of Odin light upon me, and caſt me into the horrors of Niflheim! May he ſhew me the image of my murdered huſband in a thouſand ſhapes, that I may feel the pangs of death a thouſand times! Be this oath immutable, even if a hundred ſacrifices of atonement ſmoke upon the altar! Be this oath immutable, even if a Prieſt ſay to me, 'Go thy way, thy ſins are forgiven thee!"

Thus ſwore Ildegerte. The ſurrounding virgins ſtood like ſtatues, gazing at her glowing countenance. The old Knight now caſt away his ſword, and ſeizing with both hands the helmet of the King, exclaimed—

"Then let the ſight of this each morn awake thee to the renewal of thy oath. Still let thine eye behold the blood with which this plume is beſmeared, long after the rain has waſhed it off!—Doſt thou promiſe this?"

"I promiſe it," anſwered Ildegerte.

"Take then the jewel," ſaid he, "which I purchaſed with my life."

He placed the helmet on her head.

"Brace on thy armour," added he, "and mount thy charger; for thou art appointed an avenger. My eyes grow dim. My ſtrength is exhauſted. Odin, I thank thee! Not in vain didſt thou command the ſcythe of

of death to wait till now, ere it cut the feeble thread of my exiſtence, and joined it to eternal bliſs. My laſt hour is come. My work is done. Bear me into the open air, and let me die in ſight of the ſun."

He leaned, devoid of ſtrength, upon his 'Squires. They bore him into the open air, and he died in ſight of the ſun.

NATURE

NATURE created man a medium on the ladder of perfection; he never climbs to the higheſt ſtep, never ſinks to the loweſt; he is never quite ſo good, never quite ſo bad as woman. 'Tis not of you I ſpeak, ye prattling creatures, whom Plato doubts whether to reckon among our ſpecies: you I mean, ye elevated beings, for whoſe ſake Leſſing makes an accuſation againſt Nature, that in forming you, ſhe miſtook the clay. When you are good, you ſtand between man and angel; when you are bad, you ſtand between man and devil.

Never had ſuch heroic fire glowed in the breaſt of man. Ildegerte felt a new being.

Unutter-

Unutterable ſtrength was ſhed upon her. Revenge had ſubdued the gentleneſs of love, and love added fuel to revenge.

"You are witneſſes," cried ſhe, after the old Knight had left the hall, "you are witneſſes that I am ordained an avenger. This very day will I depart to fulfil my appointment. I have no companions but the Gods and Juſtice. I have no protectors but this helmet and my ſword. Fallen are the mighty warriors of Norway. No valiant troops will follow me to battle. Ye companions of my joys! if there be one among you who has alſo ſhared my ſorrow, who wil alſo ſhare my vengeance, let her come into her ſiſter's arms, that I may preſs her to my beating heart, and breathe into her boſom the fire which burns in mine."

She

She caſt her eyes mournfully around.

" Is there not one ?" ſaid ſhe.

" All ! all ! we will all accompany thee !" cried they, ſeized with the noble enthuſiaſm, which ſtruck them with electric force.

They aſſembled round Ildegerte, and proceeded—

" Be our leader and our Queen. Appoint us by thy kiſs the ſervants of revenge."

Ildegerte embraced all, and away they fled to their chambers, hung up the harp and lute, caſt away the loom and ſpindle, and haſtened to clean their armour.

The

The heroic ardour was not long confined within the caſtle's walls. It echoed through the wood, and flew upon the wings of wind to the next town, where many a wife wept over the aſhes of her huſband, many a mother over the bones of her ſon. All dried their tears, tore helmet, mail, and ſword from the much-loved ſlain, and armed themſelves to fight under Ildegerte's banner. Swift flew the news into the land. From every quarter flocked whole troops of females, and ere the evening dew was mixed with the blood of the ſlaughtered, Ildegerte ſtood at the head of ſix thouſand Amazons, who (aſſembled on a plain, beneath the canopy of Heaven), ſwore to her the moſt dreadful oath to avenge the deaths of their huſbands, of their ſons, and of their brothers. They began their march under ſhadow of the night; and the conſtel-

conſtellation Orion was their guide. The next morning, the little army halted at the foot of a hill, when, to their no ſmall joy, the fugitives who had eſcaped deſtruction, joined them, in number about twelve thouſand.

From the ſummit of the hill, the heroine brooded with meditating gloom over the warlike preparations at her feet.

"Alas!" ſaid ſhe to herſelf, "there is the laſt reſource of our impoveriſhed land. Woe be to Norway if theſe too be ſacrificed! And ſure they muſt, unleſs a God fight for us. That triumphant army, which ſubdued the flower of our chivalry, will cruſh this ſmall undiſciplined band, as the bear cruſhes the ant-hill. I ſmile at Hela: I have

have ſworn to meet her, and each of my companions will ruſh into her arms, rather than wear the tyrant's ignominious chains. But what muſt become of thoſe poor innocents whom we have left heedleſſly playing in our ſtreets? Muſt our aged parents bend to the grave in fetters, and our children grow beneath an iron yoke?"

Mournfully her head ſunk upon her boſom; before her fancy floated the ſhadows of a dread futurity. But ſuddenly a gleam of hope ſhot through her ſoul. Theodoric, King of Denmark, Thora's nephew, was, at Swend's death, heir to the crown of Norway. The hundred tongues of Fame deſcribed him to be handſome, juſt, and valiant.

"The

"The blood of Thora," ſaid each ſtranger who had dwelt a few days at his Court, "the blood of Thora flows in the veins of this young hero."

Ildegerte diſpatched, without delay, ambaſſadors to Theodoric, who ſpoke to this effect—

"Swend, thy kinſman, is no more. He is murdered by the villany of Canfried. All the Nobles of Norway are deſtroyed. A female only is advancing, at the head of females and of fugitives, to avenge her deſolated country and her Monarch's death. Summon thy Knights, and aſſemble all their vaſſals. Haſte, haſte to defend a land which henceforth owns thee as its King."

Upon

Upon the ſwifteſt horſes the ambaſſadors purſued their way to Denmark's borders; while Ildegerte advanced towards the enemy, who, fearleſs of attack, were diſperſed over the country, laying waſte the fields, plundering the cottages, and murdering infancy and age.

With a ſmile of deriſion Canfried received the firſt account of the approaching Amazons. With a look, like the look of the devil, when he ſees the pious ſin, he heard that Ildegerte herſelf was at their head.

"'Tis well," cried he, with a ſcoffing laugh. "The bird flies of its own accord into the cage. Welcome! welcome, beauteous bride! In vain doſt thou oppoſe thyſelf to me. My ſword was drawn for thee, and

and cannot be turned againſt thee. Amid the din of war, I'll lead thee to my couch, voluptuouſly unclaſp thy corſelet, enjoy thy virgin ſtruggles, and revel in that heaving boſom, ill adapted to be thus confined in mail."

In theſe terms did the tyrant, lolling on ſilken cuſhions, feaſt his fancy with laſcivious hopes; and as Ildegerte was not yet within his power, he ſummoned ſome harlot from the camp, and threw himſelf into her arms.

The ſcattered bands, of late engaged in murder and in rapine, ere long returned affrighted to the camp. Ildegerte's out-poſts had ſeized part of the robbers, and the reſt had fled to announce the enemy's approach.

" Art

"Art thou ſo near already?" cried Canfried, in a tone of diabolical exultation. "By my faith, thou ſeemeſt to have an eager longing for a King's embrace. But ere the ſword be uſed to lead thee to my bed, let me once more try the effect of thoſe weapons, which, when artfully forged, will make a female's anger melt, like ſnow in ſpring before the ſun—the weapons of flattery."

He ſpoke, ſeized the quill, and from his ſhallow brain, dried by exceſs, forced this epiſtle.

"*Canfried, King of Sweden and Norway, to Ildegerte.*

"I am not come to fight againſt thee, but to be thy ſlave. Caſt away thy threaten-

ing

ing armour; the victory was long ſince thine. Since the night on which miſtaken raillery divided us, Canfried has ever borne the image of thy beauty in his heart. For thee he drew his ſword; for thee he has ſacrificed thouſands; for thee he has hazarded his own life. And wouldſt thou fight againſt him who lays his laurels at thy feet? Far more noble would it be, wert thou generouſly to ſtretch forth thy hand to him, whom thou haſt conquered, and who wears thy chains. Or, canſt thou think, lovely, yet raſh enchantreſs, that, becauſe thy girls have ſometimes broken a lance, they will dare to cope with my victorious Knights, beneath whoſe arms fell Tott and Uffo?— Baniſh the romantic whim. I offer thee my heart and peace. Let not thy lovely troops advance. It behoves me to wait

on thee—me, who am determined to poſſeſs thee, as friend or foe.

Beneath a canopy, majeſtically leaning on her lance, Ildegerte received the herald, who brought this letter.

"Thank the law of nations," ſaid ſhe to him, "that I do not puniſh in the meſſenger the audacity of the libertine who ſent him. Bring a ſack hither; throw ſome filthy dog into it, and deliver it to this man. When thou openeſt the ſack in preſence of thy maſter, and the dog runs out covered with ſores, ſay, This is Ildegerte's anſwer and her dowry (23)."

With theſe words ſhe turned her back to the trembling meſſenger, and went to pre-

pare her faithful friends for the deciſive hour.

" What! not yet humbled!" cried Canfried, with ferocious mien. " Still that proud contempt with which I was accuſed of having ſtolen thy ſandals! Fall then a ſacrifice to thine obſtinacy. Alive I'll catch thee, and my vaſſals ſhall deflour thee."

Towards evening, Canfried ſent a ſecond herald to the camp.

" To-morrow," thus ran his meſſage, " ſhall the riſing ſun be witneſs of my triumph. Arm thyſelf, girl! Inſpire thy girls with courage. To-morrow will I ſend my baggage-boys againſt thee, who ſhall bind the

the raſh creatures to their horſes' tails, and drag them to my preſence."

A ſmile was Ildegerte's anſwer—a forced ſmile upon her countenance, and dark preſages of the future in her ſoul. She could not to herſelf deny, that her ſmall band was too weak to contend with an enemy thrice as numerous; and that the courage and intrepidity of a few troops haſtily collected, were not a match for ſkill and diſcipline. Her Amazons, indeed, had devoted themſelves to death, and ſhe herſelf would think it happineſs to die for him, who died for her. 'Twas not the fear of death that made her tremble, but the thought of going to Valhall, where the old Knight perhaps might meet her with the queſtion, "Haſt thou fulfilled thy oath?" Then to be obliged to

anſwer, "No," although a gaping wound in her breaſt excuſed that No—this, this alone—

"Oh Father of the Gods!" exclaimed ſhe, with eyes ſwimming in tears, "this evening is perhaps the laſt of my exiſtence. If thou haſt decreed that the battle of to-morrow ſhall decide for ever the ſlavery of my country, Oh! at leaſt permit me, in the heat of action, to find the villain who robbed my huſband of his life, that my arm may ſearch the way to his execrable heart! Let us fall together. Hurl him not to Niflheim's everlaſting darkneſs; allow him not the ſmall conſolation of ſuffering with many thouſands: take him to Valhall, where he will be the only ſufferer, that, in the happineſs of him whom he perſecuted,

in

in the bliſs of him whom he murdered, he may feel the bittereſt of agonies."

Thus prayed Ildegerte, in whoſe heart the thirſt for vengeance had choaked the milder ſenſations of female gentleneſs.

The ſtars already ſparkled in the ſky; Ildegerte ſent meſſengers from tent to tent.

"Refreſh yourſelves," ſaid they; "let the cup of joy paſs round, and reſt till ſunriſe. Then brace on your armour, pray to the Gods, and ſally forth upon the plain, for to-morrow is the deciſive day."

The troops obeyed; they filled the horn, and drank to a happy meeting in Valhall.

Meanwhile Ildegerte aſcended the hill, upon which the moon ſhone in awful majeſty, erected a ſmall altar, and ſacrificed to the God of war. Helga, one of her deareſt companions, followed her.

"Let me," ſaid ſhe, with ſiſterly affection, "reveal to you my doubts and fears. You did not act wiſely in diſmiſſing Canfried's meſſenger ſo ſcornfully."

"And what would Helga have done?" demanded Ildegerte.

"You have ſent ambaſſadors to Theodoric, King of Denmark," rejoined ſhe. "Fame ſpeaks loudly in the praiſe of this young hero, but our revenge is not his revenge, nor our impatience his. Allowing that

that he accedes to your requeſt; granting that he is allured by the proſpect of an empty throne, and takes up arms to gain a ſecond crown, not being ſufficiently oppreſſed by the weight of one; ſtill, what can you expect from this? The deciſive hour approaches. Pray to Odin that he will beſtow wings upon Theodoric's army. We muſt conquer without him, or die without him; for, at all events, the King of Denmark will come too late."

"And what do you infer from all this?" aſked Ildegerte.

"That you would have done better," replied Helga, "had you, for a little while, caſt away theſe manly arms, and uſed the arms which Nature grants to all our ſex—

cunning and deception. You might have detained Canfried's meſſenger for a few days with promiſes, and then given ſome equivocal reply, ſome gleam of hope. By this mode we ſhould have gained time—have gained every thing."

"You are right," returned the heroine; "but for the murderer of her huſband, Ildegerte has but one reply. To have left Canfried in the ſuppoſition (were it but the ſuppoſition of a moment) that my ear was open to his vile propoſals, would have been a breach of my oath, would have been treaſon to the ſhadow of our King. No! Of this not a word more. Let us remain true to our honour, and die."

"I admire your courage, but not your policy," ſaid Helga.

"As

"As you pleaſe," rejoined Ildegerte. "I have liſtened to, and anſwered your objections as a friend; I now, as your Chief, command ſilence. The morning begins to dawn; our moments are counted. Go; leave me to my devotions. Climb to the ſummit of the hill, and obſerve the Swediſh camp. As ſoon as you perceive the enemy in motion, call to me, that we may deſcend, and wake our friends."

Helga went. Ildegerte ſacrificed and prayed. The border of the eaſtern cloud was tipped with gold.

"Do you ſee nothing, Helga?" demanded Ildegerte.

"A death-like ſilence reigns around," ſaid ſhe; "I hear nothing but the warbling of the early lark."

Ildegerte prayed fervently. The ſmoke from the altar aſcended towards heaven. The outward edge of the ſun appeared in the horizon. Ildegerte repeated her queſtion.

"I ſee," returned Helga, "a few men ſcattered here and there through the camp of the enemy. They are leading their horſes to the water."

"The time draws near," ſaid Ildegerte.

She raiſed her hands and eyes towards heaven, and prayed aloud. The ſun roſe in full majeſty.

"What

"What do you now ſee, Helga?" aſked ſhe.

"I ſee," anſwered Helga, "a thick cloud of duſt far in the weſt. I ſee the glittering of ſpears far as my eye can reach."

"In the weſt!" exclaimed Ildegerte. "Does your imagination deceive you?"

"Come yourſelf, and ſee," replied Helga.

The heroine mounted the hill. Before her eyes appeared an innumerable army. The ſun caſt his beams upon their poliſhed helmets. Already was her ear aſſailed by the

neighing of their ſteeds, and the claſhing of their arms.

"Heavens!" cried Ildegerte; "we are loſt. Odin has given life to ſtones in order to yoke our miſerable country!"

"See how they ſpread from ſide to ſide, continued Helga; "the wood ſeems to be alive. Still, ſtill freſh troops appear."

"Deſcend! deſcend!" ſhouted Ildegerte. "Thunder to our warriors. Let us die at leaſt with ſword in hand."

They ruſhed together down the hill, and lo! the ambaſſadors who had been ſent to ſue for aid from Denmark, met them.

"Whither,"

"Whither," exclaimed Ildegerte, "whither ſo quick? What means this breathleſs haſte? Who are the countleſs troops advancing from the weſt?"

"The troops of Denmark," anſwered they, "of our liberater and avenger. But a day's march from our camp, beyond the wood we found him, at the head of thirty thouſand warriors. Long had Fame announced to him the danger that threatened this kingdom, yet did the news of our late Monarch's death force tears from his eyes. He is a friendly Prince, and ſeems a gallant Knight. He commends himſelf to your ſervices, and ſays, he hopes to know you better. You muſt immediately call forth your troops, and take your ſtation on the left, while he draws toward the river on the

right. Liſten to the firſt ſound of the trumpet, which is the ſignal that Theodoric's army is fording the river; the ſecond announces to you the ſafe arrival of the troops on the other ſide; and the third is the moment when you and they are to commence the attack. Odin grant ſucceſs to your arms!"

They bowed to the earth, and joyfully haſtened down the hill to communicate the tidings, and with them courage through their little camp. What ſhouts of tranſport echoed from every ſide! The ambaſſadors were incloſed, and lifted in the air, while grateful bleſſings were poured upon Theodoric. The cries of joy floated to the enemy acroſs the plain. Stunned with horror, they beheld the innumerable ſpears, and burniſhed

burniſhed armour glittering in the ſun-beams. Long Ildegerte ſtood immoveable. With uplifted hands, and the tear of gratitude ſparkling in her eye, ſhe looked towards the habitation of the Gods. At length ſhe threw herſelf into Helga's arms—

"Now, dear friend, thou ſeeſt Odin is juſt. His thunder ſeems to ſleep, but ſuddenly the villain feels its force. The hour of vengeance is arrived."

She ſpoke, and haſtened to the troops, who received her with loud acclamations. Already were they mounted on their chargers; mighty confidence beamed upon every countenance, and each with eagerneſs awaited the third ſound of the trumpet, the ſignal of attack.

Towards

Towards the left, as Theodoric commanded, Ildegerte led her valiant troops, who followed her with ſongs and jubilee, as if to tournaments and ſports. Not far from Canfried's camp, ſhe ordered them to halt, and with rapture heard the firſt ſound of the trumpet.

Meanwhile, the tyrant raged from tent to tent. In vain! Fallen was the robber's courage. Inſtead of graſping his ſword, each trembling coward ſeized the plunder, and prepared for flight. Surrounded by dangers, and almoſt ſinking under deſpair, Canfried ſent a herald to Theodoric, King of Denmark, who thus addreſſed him—

"Why art thou come againſt me, who live in peace with thee? Join thy troops to mine,

mine, that we may annihilate theſe women, who have fled from the ſpindle: then will we fraternally divide the realms of Norway, conquered by my valiant arm."

"Go, tell thy maſter," ſaid Theodoric, "to reconcile himſelf with Odin, for his laſt hour is come. Norway is my hereditary right, nor will I ever ſhare it with a robber."

The herald faithfully delivered his meſſage, and Ildegerte heard the ſecond ſound of the trumpet. Deſpair ſtretched her ſable pinions over Canfried's head. The centinels ſtole one by one from his tent, and he, on whoſe nod, but yeſterday, the lives of thouſands hung, remained alone.

"Is

"Is it then reſolved?" cried he, foaming with fury. "Muſt all my high premeditated ſchemes be blaſted in their bud?—Ah! then ſhall my death at leaſt diſtinguiſh me from this baſe herd of flying daſtards. Pale and aghaſt, poſterity ſhall hear how Canfried fell. Riſe, demons of Niflheim! Cloud my ſenſes, that I may ruſh impetuous on their ſwords, and ſeek the girl who tears the laurels from my brow.—What is this that boils within me? In vain do ye torment me, ſenſations, termed by the vulgar, pangs of conſcience: in vain does the bloody recollection of my ſins attempt to torture me.—Thou phantom, called Virtue, I die without knowing thee. Oh, how wretched is he, whoſe miſery ariſes from his own crimes! My heart is my accomplice, and my executioner. But I will not feel that I am wretched.

wretched. Death is my hope, and life my puniſhment. Curſed be thou, Odin! I hate myſelf. I hate mankind! Away to death! Down, down to hell!

Furious he ruſhed forward, and ſaw part of his flying army far away.

"There the cowards fly!" cried he. "Is there then no one who will die with his King?"

He looked round. His eye fell upon an old Knight, who was attentively ſurveying the ſtump of an oak, which had been lately felled. It was the ſame old Swede who ſlew the murderer of Swend, and led the dying Prince to a neighbouring ſpring, for the purpoſe of refreſhing him.

"What

"What art thou doing here?" demanded Canfried.

"I am obſerving this tree," replied the Knight.

"Is it ſo remarkable a ſight, that it can make thee forget thine own ſafety? aſked the King.

"It is indeed remarkable," anſwered the Swede. "But yeſterday its top defied the hurricane."

"I underſtand thee," returned the tyrant, "but even in his fall ſhall Canfried ſtill be Canfried. Go. Fly, and leave me to my fate."

"I ſhall

"I ſhall not fly," ſaid the Knight.

"Thou ſeeſt we are forſaken," rejoined Canfried.

"I am not forſaken," anſwered he.

"Not forſaken!" exclaimed the King. "On whom doſt thou place thy hope?"

"On God and my arm."

"On God!" cried Canfried, ſhuddering.

"Yes," ſaid the Knight, with a look of firmneſs towards heaven, "on God."

"And on thy arm?" continued Canfried, recovering. "A ſingle arm againſt two armies?"

"I know

"I know how to die," returned the Knight.

"I know it too," exclaimed the King; "I will not ſurvive the dreadful hour which robs me of my glory, to be bound in ignominious chains, and dragged before a woman's throne. Here," proceeded he, drawing his ſword, "take this, and obey thy Monarch's laſt command:—Stab me."

"Never!" replied the veteran.

"I will die," ſaid Canfried, "by the hand of a friend and a Knight. Take it and ſtrike."

"Heaven forbid," rejoined he, "that I ſhould ſtain my hands with the blood of my

King! Thus far we are not as yet degraded. Let theſe hirelings fly. The better half of thy army ſtill remains immoveable; and though it be not equal to the enemy in numbers, ſtill many a valiant Knight defends thy cauſe. Advance, my Liege! Shew thyſelf at the head of thy warriors, and if thou muſt die, die in battle like a Knight."

"'Tis well!" cried the tyrant. "Follow me. Seas of blood ſhall pay for every drop of mine, and if Odin grant me victory to-day, I'll build a temple, and confeſs aloud—there is a God."—

He haſtily vaulted on his charger, and flew to collect the ſcattered troops, which fear and cowardice had left him.

The

The warlike trumpet ſounded the third time; Ildegerte heard it with a beating heart, courageouſly brandiſhed her ſword, and ruſhed at the head of her Amazons againſt the hoſtile ſquadrons. At the ſame moment, like a thick wood, the lances of the Danes forced their way. At their head fought, with glowing ardour, Theodoric the King, and Prince Harold, his favourite. A cloud of arrows darkened the ſun. Amid the din of war, the neighbouring cataract was heard no more. In vain did the deſpairing tyrant atchieve prodigies of valour. The heaps of ſlain increaſed around him every inſtant; every inſtant numbers forſook him, and begged their lives as they fled from the field.

" 'Tis

"'Tis done!" cried Canfried, with ghaſtly fury; "I have reached the goal of my career. Black demons of Niflheim! dying, I devote myſelf to you. Help, help me to find the woman, whom I once ſo ardently wiſhed to poſſeſs. My love is converted into fury. She refuſed a Monarch's bed; be ſhe my companion on the bed of death!"

Wildly he rolled his eyes around the field, in ſearch of Ildegerte. Ildegerte ſought him, and ſoon they met. An involuntary tremor thrilled through Canfried's frame, when, by the crowned lion, he recognized, on Ildegerte's head, Swend's royal helmet.

"Has hell belched thee forth?" cried he, raiſing his maſſy ſabre, to conclude the combat with one deadly blow.

Ildegerte, unequal to him in ſtrength, but more nimble, eſcaped the threatening ſtroke, which glanced down her poliſhed armour. Now, as he raiſed his arm a ſecond time, ſhe ſpied the opening in his corſelet, and before his ſtroke deſcended, plunged her ſword into his boſom to the hilt. Bellowing, he fell at his horſe's feet. Black ſtreams of gore ruſhed down his armour, and defiled the graſs. With the moſt dreadful curſes upon Ildegerte, and blaſphemy upon his dying tongue, he vomited his impious ſoul.

This combat decided victory for Norway, and reſtored her liberty. All that could fly, fled, and thoſe, who ſaw no way open, fell on their knees, caſt away their arms, and threw

threw themſelves upon the generoſity of their conquerors.

The old Knight alone, by whoſe hand Canfried had wiſhed to die, had fixed himſelf againſt the ſame tree, which, a few hours before, had foretold to him his Monarch's fate; and with ſword in hand defended himſelf againſt the increaſing multitude. Him Theodoric diſcovered at a diſtance, ſprung forward, and diſperſed his troops, who were baſely fighting againſt a ſingle man.

"Yield!" ſaid he to the almoſt exhauſted Knight. "Look round; thou art alone. How comes this youthful raſhneſs in a veteran's breaſt?"

"'Tis becauſe I am a veteran," replied he, "that I do not wiſh to ſurvive the loſs of this day's battle. But I yield to thee on one condition."

"Name it," returned Theodoric.

"Let me bear away the body of my King, and go in peace to give it honourable burial."

"Didſt thou love thy King?" demanded the young Monarch.

"He was my King," anſwered the Swede, "and I did my duty."

"Enough!" ſaid Theodoric, much affected, "thy petition is granted."

"I have

"I have made no petition," replied he; "I have but required of thee what I (were thy body lying at my feet) ſhould not deny to one of thy Knights."

"Go then in peace," returned Theodoric, taking his gauntlet off, "but not ere thou haſt given the King of Denmark thy hand."

"I thank thee," anſwered the Knight, ſhaking his hand, "and in return, young hero, accept the honeſt counſel of a man in years. Let not thy conqueſt make thee arrogant. Let the example of Canfried be ever preſent to thee, and teach thee how much ſtronger a defence than ſword and mail, is—the love of thy people."

"I promiſe," ſaid the young King, "to follow thy inſtructions. Come with me to my Court, and witneſs it."

"No," replied the Swede, "I have a native home, and two infant grandchildren."

"Let me then, at leaſt, take thy friendſhip with me," ſaid Theodoric.

"Thou haſt it," rejoined he.

Thus they parted. The body of Canfried was laid upon a carriage, and ſlowly borne towards the borders of his kingdom. No lamentation filled the towns through which it paſſed. No tear moiſtened the ſand which covered it.

Scarce

Scarce had Ildegerte fulfilled her oath as an avenger; ſcarce did ſhe ſee that nothing now remained but to bind her temples with the wreath of victory, than ſhe left the field of battle, accompanied by Helga only, haſtened to the camp, climbed the hill, which had ſmoked with her ſacrifice on the preceding night, and offered the firſtlings of her gratitude to Odin. As ſhe went to rid herſelf of her armour, ſhe was met by Theodoric and the Nobles of his Court, among whom was Prince Harold. With reverence the King alighted from his horſe, and accoſted Ildegerte in theſe words——

"To you, valiant lady, belong my thanks, and the thanks of your country. Receive them in ſight of the whole army, and allow me and my retinue to behold your face."

Ildegerte humbly anſwered—

"My Lord and Sovereign! your generoſity is pleaſed to aſcribe to me what, without your powerful aſſiſtance, I had never effected. You are the deliverer of my native land. Allow Ildegerte to be the firſt who does homage to you."

She opened her viſor with downcaſt eyes, and modeſtly knelt at his feet. How enchanting was her appearance! How majeſtic the air added to her figure by Swend's helmet, from which a few ringlets had ſtolen into ſight! How negligently beautiful the belt with golden fringe, that hung from her ſhoulder! Theodoric and his courtiers were aſtoniſhed. The former almoſt forgot the rules of courteſy, raiſed her with a

trembling hand, ſtammered forth a few ſyllables, and kiſſed her forehead. Ildegerte, however, ſeemed not in the leaſt to have obſerved the impreſſion ſhe had made on the aſſembly, and withdrew to her tent, in order to exchange her armour for a female dreſs.

THINK not, miſtaken mortals, to eſcape the inviting dangers, which ſo often coſt you happineſs and peace. It is from them only that the ſpace of many years, of many miles cannot protect you. Your enemy is your heart, and if you never had a conteſt, you have had no enemy. In our boſoms we all bear a great enchanter, who can make old men young, and beggars Kings. Oh! if we knew not love and death, what could convince the haughty man that he is but a man?

King Theodoric returned to his pavilion, not as he had left it. Every object ſeemed beautiful

beautiful and fair, for in every object he beheld Ildegerte.

Prince Harold returned to his pavilion, not as he had left it. All was to him unaccountable vacuity, for his heart was full—was full of Ildegerte.

It is time to ſketch, with a few light touches, the characters of theſe two royal youths.

Theodoric was young and inexperienced, open to every impreſſion, eaſily deceived, and eaſily led aſtray. He had a warm eſteem for every good and noble action, yet often miſtook the outward appearance of good and noble, for reality. In every inſinuating

ſmile he ſaw a friend, into whoſe arms he threw himſelf without conſideration.

Harold was older and more ſubtle, pliant and reſerved, ambitious and voluptuous. He had the look of calmneſs with a boiling heart. He had a countenance, which, as the times required, aſſumed each maſk. He was pious with the pious, and ſcoffed with the free-thinker. He had once made an attempt to revive an ancient right to the crown, and his impotence alone reſtrained him within the bounds of a ſubject. In vain did many an aged counſellor, who looked into futurity, warn Theodoric to diſmiſs this dangerous rival from his throne. To policy Theodoric ſeldom liſtened, for he thought it too much at variance with humanity; and Harold knew how to ſilence all ſuſpicion in a way

a way ſo crafty—knew ſo artfully how to adopt every humour, that to the unſuſpecting Monarch his ſociety ſoon became indiſpenſable.

Propped on his hand, Theodoric ſat, recalling to his mind with rapture every motion of the heroine; and ruminating upon every word that ſhe had uttered.

With folded arms, with long and haſty ſteps, Harold meaſured his pavilion, fabricating ſchemes compoſed of love and of ambition.

Let us ſurpriſe them both. Let us fly, ſwift as thought, from tent to tent. Lend your right ear to the love-ſick ſighs of Theodoric,

Theodoric, and your left to the daring plots of Harold :—

THEODORIC.

I love Ildegerte. In vain do I endeavour to conceal it from myself.

HAROLD.

The girl is beautiful, to desperation beautiful.

THEODORIC.

Would that I could possess her!

HAROLD.

I must possess her.

THEODORIC.

I am a King, but would not owe my conquest

queſt to the ſplendour of my crown. 'Tis her heart I wiſh to gain.

HAROLD.

I am a Prince of royal blood, and the road to the throne is not yet ſhut to me. Her vanity will grant me what perhaps her heart might deny.

THEODORIC.

Were ſhe vain enough to be dazzled by the grandeur of a crown, I had rather loſe her.

HAROLD.

No matter whether love or ambition bring her to my arms.

THEODORIC.

THEODORIC.

Shall I venture to declare my ſentiments to her?

HAROLD.

This very day will I find an opportunity of diſcloſing my paſſion to her.

THEODORIC.

I ſhould not be able to utter a word.

HAROLD.

My captivating eloquence ſhe never can reſiſt.

THEODORIC.

For the firſt time I feel the real force of love.

HAROLD.

HAROLD.

To-day I bade adieu to my knowledge of the ſex.

THEODORIC.

My heart pants for ſympathy. Harold ſhall know all.

HAROLD.

But buried be the ſecret in my own breaſt.

THEODORIC.

Never, never did I feel ſuch fearful anxiety! I muſt extricate myſelf from this dreadful ſtate of uncertainty.

HAROLD.

Not too haſty, be my motto. A wiſe man, though he love, will ſleep in peace,

and

and leave the ripening of his plants to time; for the moſt beauteous bloſſom is of leſs value than the meaneſt fruit.

Such were the ſoliloquies of both.—Theodoric diſpatched a page to Ildegerte, to enquire whether ſhe had need of reſt after her fatigues, or if he might have the honour of an audience.

Harold, on his part, had ſtationed ſpies to watch each footſtep which approached Ildegerte.

In the meantime, the page brought to Theodoric the wiſhed-for anſwer, that his viſit would be acceptable. With throbbing heart, and the glow of love upon his cheek, he entered her tent, and was received with great

great politeneſs. The youth gazed at her full blue eye in mute aſtoniſhment. She had caſt away her armour; her auburn treſſes were bound in a braid, and no longer buried beneath the helmet, which had covered her majeſtic forehead. In a long white robe, encircled at her ſlender waiſt by her blue girdle, which was tied at her left ſide, from whence its ends, bordered with ſilver fringe, hung negligently down; with a hand ſo fair and ſoft, as if intended only for love's preſſure, not to graſp the ſword, ſhe ſat oppoſite the King, bewitching as the goddeſs of youth and beauty, who, but a few hours before, had ſeemed the goddeſs of revenge and war. It was an eloquent pauſe, with which the converſation opened. Theodoric's looks ſpoke, and Ildegerte involuntarily caſt down her eyes.

Since

Since the creation of the world, it has been the cuſtom, when one has nothing, or any thing of conſequence to ſay, to begin with a remark on the good or bad weather; whichever be the caſe, the tranſition always takes place by a cough. Theodoric too pointed out, by ſtammers, to Ildegerte, the delightful day, which even the tenth month of the year afforded them. Ildegerte agreed with him, and that ſubject was at an end. The tranſition-cough now followed. Purple cheeks gave notice that the confeſſion was approaching; downcaſt eyes announced it, and fingers, which inadvertently played with the points of Ildegerte's girdle accompanied it as interpreters. The moſt innocent girl feels an inward ſenſation ariſe from theſe ſymptoms, which calls to her—"Be on thy guard. The enemy approaches."

"Angelic

"Angelic woman!" began Theodoric; "you have conquered friend and foe—the foe by your arm, the friend by your eye."

Ildegerte bluſhed; and, as uſual on ſuch occaſions, aſſumed the appearance of not having underſtood his meaning.

"Your Majeſty ſpeaks in enigmas," anſwered ſhe.

"Is it poſſible," exclaimed the King, "that you alone know not the power of your charms? You had a heart for revenge," proceeded he, ſeizing her hand, "have you then none for love?"

"You either banter me, or forget yourſelf," replied ſhe, withdrawing her hand.

"The

"The former were an inſult," ſaid Theodoric, "the latter in your preſence very poſſible."

"You may mean what you ſay," returned ſhe, "yet ſomewhat odd it ſounds in the mouth of a man but juſt retired from battle."

"Surely not," obſerved the King, "unleſs you take the heat of blood for love. For, in what other reſpect does the emotion of a ſoul, after a battle, reſemble that ſweet ſenſation? But ſay, what do you call love?"

"Go, aſk the prieſts in the temple of their Goddeſs," rejoined Ildegerte. "I am not initiated, and know her only from the poems of our bards."

"Can falſhood dwell in ſuch a form?" cried Theodoric. "Am I ignorant that Swend——"

"I know what you would ſay," returned ſhe, interrupting him. "In his arms I hoped to have learnt it. Till now I have felt but gratitude towards him. It was the impulſe to all that I have done. But I have been told, that to love is but another ſtep; and, without a bluſh, I own my heart was reſolved to take that ſtep."

"Ildegerte," replied the young Monarch, "may I hope for your friendſhip?"

"Whatever is valuable in my friendſhip," anſwered ſhe, "I give you willingly."

"Enough!"

"Enough!" exclaimed he, again ſeizing her hand. "From friendſhip to love is likewiſe but a ſtep."

"A ſtep improper both for you and me," rejoined Ildegerte.

"You," ſaid Theodoric, ſomewhat hurt, "now banter me, or forget yourſelf. For indifference I was prepared, but not for contempt."

"Hear me then," returned ſhe. "It were prudery any longer to affect an ignorance of your meaning. I underſtand your looks and words. But does it become you, the King of Denmark and Norway, in the midſt of your victorious career, upon the path of glory, to ſue for a woman's heart, who

who has no other dowry than her virtue? You are Lord over your realms, yet is your heart their ſlave, and muſt never be your adviſer. Subdue this flighty paſſion. The daughters of Princes wait for you, and Kings deſire you for a ſon-in-law. You will make powerful alliances. The name of Theodoric will be revered by your neighbours, and the baſis of your throne will be immoveable."

"My throne," replied Theodoric, "is founded on the love of my ſubjects; and who is better able to augment this love than Ildegerte? For, even when I hear you ſpeak, I fancy myſelf in the midſt of my ſenators. Such exactly are their arguments."

"You are paying me the greateſt compliment," anſwered ſhe, "perhaps without intending it."

"Right!" ſaid he. "Ildegerte, you have caſt away ſword and mail. Be once more quite a woman. Think you not that I bear enough when my head ſuſtains the crown? Muſt it alſo preſs upon my heart?"

"You belong entirely to your people," rejoined ſhe.

"'Tis well!" exclaimed Theodoric; "I make the people judges between you and me. Let them decide whether they know one more worthy of the throne—whether they will have any other Queen."

"Not

"Not ſo," returned Ildegerte. "You ought to ſee clearly even if your ſubjects be blind. Believe me, my friend (for by that name I will moſt willingly addreſs you), when the firſt ardour of your youthful paſſion had ſubſided, you would ſee but too clearly. Then, what a wretch ſhould I be! I entreat you, Theodoric, to be ſatisfied with my eſteem."

"What you have juſt ſaid," anſwered he, "I hope you did not mean it, was blaſphemy to Louna, and treaſon to your charms. No, never——"

"Here the good King was juſt about to pour forth a ſolemn declaration of his paſſion, accompanied by oaths, ſighs, tears, and vows; and my reader would, without

mercy, have been obliged to liſten to them, word for word, had not Prince Harold, as if called for, entered the tent, to inform his Majeſty, that a large body of Swedes had been ſeen beyond the river, and that he had judged it expedient to double the guard. In reality it was a mere pretext; for this large body melted by degrees into a ſcore of ſtraggling fugitives. His ſpies had informed him that Theodoric had been ſeen alone, and in deep meditation wandering to Ildegerte's tent. The converſation had already laſted half an hour, without the preſence of a third. Enough for a miſtruſtful heart! enough to rouſe the ſeeds of jealouſy! Harold therefore haſtened to interrupt a viſit, which wore an appearance ſo ſuſpicious.

The

The King, unpleaſant as it was to be ſurpriſed at this deciſive moment, obeyed the duties of the public weal, and, accompanied by the Prince, left the tent. Ildegerte remained alone, with a perplexity and timidity about her heart, which ſeemed not exactly to agree with her late politic advice.

Harold, meanwhile, made every indirect endeavour to draw the ſecret from the King. But with Theodoric there was no need of circumlocution. His open heart offered to the traitor what he had but expected as the reward of artifice.

"Kinſman," began he, with a hearty ſhake of the hand, "oft haſt thou ſeen me roving, like a bee, from flower to flower. I thought myſelf happy, and perhaps was

happy. But my hour at laſt is come. I love. I love with an ardour unfelt before, which ſeems to ſtretch my heart beyond its limits. Would that I could make the whole world happy!"

"It almoſt ſeems to me," anſwered Harold, "that there is no occaſion to requeſt a name which your viſit has betrayed to me."

"True," replied Theodoric; "the charms of Ildegerte only could have chained this fickle heart. Sure Odin ſent her from a better world, to give us a foreknowledge of thoſe heavenly joys——"

"Hold! hold!" cried Harold. "This you muſt tell herſelf, before the enthuſiaſtic fire

fire evaporates; or, probably you have already done it?"

"I ſcarce know what I told her," ſaid the King; "nothing very wiſe, I dare ſay. What ſhe anſwered, I know better. The noble girl refuſed a crown."

"What!" exclaimed Harold. "Is it poſſible that love can have led you ſo far aſtray, as to make you offer your crown to the daughter of a Knight?"

"The daughter of a Knight!" repeated Theodoric; "What mean'ſt thou? Had blind Fate ſnatched another lot from Fortune's urn, this Knight as eaſily had been a King, as eaſily a beggar. Still Ildegerte had been Ildegerte."

" But, pardon me," rejoined the Prince, " is it not your duty to conſult the wiſhes of your ſubjects, and the welfare of the ſtate ?"

" Thou too canſt talk like my old unfeeling ſenators," replied Theodoric. " The wiſhes of my ſubjects !—My ſubjects adore Ildegerte. The welfare of the ſtate !—What can be more profitable to the ſtate than to beſtow on it a Queen, whoſe wiſdom will ſhare with me the load of government, whoſe valour will ſupply to me the place of an experienced Chief ?—Our kinſman, Swend, thought thus. Him Thora formed, and blindfold will I follow his example."

" Not if Love bind the bandage on your eyes," ſaid Harold. " Moſt willingly would I aſſiſt you in this plan, were it the only

only one which gained you what you wiſh. But why abſolutely make a Queen of her?"

"Peace!" cried Theodoric, "I tremble even to imagine what thou art about to ſay. For ſhame!"

"But—" proceeded Harold.

"Not another word," rejoined the King. "I am reſolved. To-morrow, ſoon as propriety allows, go to Ildegerte. Summon all your rhetoric, Harold. Paint to her, in glowing colours, all I feel, yet am not able to expreſs. A third can do it better. To-morrow ſhe muſt explain, and will too, I dare be ſworn. Go; ſpeak as a friend. I, meanwhile, will act as a lover."

Harold was ſilent; for he feared, by further oppoſition, to betray himſelf. He went, and felt, as the hawk would feel, if forced to replace the ſtolen pigeon in its neſt. He threw himſelf upon his couch, and ſlept—little. With pleaſure would he have re-animated every Swede, whoſe body was ſtretched upon the plain, in order, if poſſible, to quench the blazing fire of love in the King's boſom, by the hurry of battle. With pleaſure would he have recalled the fugitives, gathered their ſcattered bands, inſpired them with temerity, and urged them to a nocturnal ſurpriſe. But as the flight of the vanquiſhed enemy forbade him to indulge ſo frivolous a hope, and as he had to no effect racked his brain for a pretext, and toſſed upon his couch till the morning watch; what remained but to ſmile upon the wheel,

to

to curſe the paſt, and await from futurity what the preſent moment ſnatched away.

"Why do I torment myſelf?" cried he, ſpringing up. "If I cannot enjoy Ildegerte, I may the Queen of Denmark and Norway. Let fools feaſt upon the idle fancy that the firſt embrace is moſt delicious. What excites this ſilly wiſh in man?—Vanity. The idea that he is the firſt who awakes theſe ſenſations in the girl. Well, be it ſo, if I be but the firſt who make her wiſh for theſe once unknown ſenſations. 'Tis a mighty leap from the prattling of a child to the chaunting of a bard, yet muſt I learn the former ere I can underſtand the latter. Succeſs to thee, Theodoric! Teach the girl to prattle, while I tune my harp."

Thus did the vain fool conſole himſelf with the plans, hatched by his heated brain, while the young King, inſpired by ardent love, made preparations in the camp throughout the night, which I ſhall not diſcloſe to you, reader, that when you have long enough puzzled yourſelf in vain, I may ſurpriſe you, as Theodoric ſurpriſed the object of his affection.

Now, when the morning dawned, too late for the impatience of the King, too early for the Prince's jealouſy, Harold ſlowly crept to Ildegerte's tent, and enquired of the females, who guarded it without, whether ſhe might be ſpoken to ſo early.

"Whether by you, Prince, I know not," replied one of them, "but her friend

friend Helga has been with her ſince break of day.

"Natural enough!" grumbled Harold. "Ildegerte, with all her valour, is but at laſt a woman. She muſt have her confidante. The conqueſt of hearts flatters female vanity but little, unleſs the mouth be allowed to blazon it, or at leaſt to whiſper it in the ear of this, and that, under an injunction of ſecrecy.—Go, girl," ſaid he aloud, "and announce me."

The Amazon went, while the Prince, full of choler, ſtamped into the earth the harmleſs daiſies that grew around the tent.

Ere long, Helga appeared in a light morning dreſs, and beckoned to Harold that he might

might approach. He found Ildegerte, with her head propped upon her arm. She appeared to have had but little reſt, and the faint ſmile upon her countenance ſeemed almoſt forced.

"Oh how happy were the King," began Harold, approaching her with a familiar air, "had he any ſhare in this meditative poſture!"

"How ſtrange," anſwered ſhe, ſmiling, "that the firſt word of man to woman muſt always be a compliment! What a mean opinion muſt you entertain of us! Well, yes; I was thinking of the King."

"Then would I bet," replied Harold, "that the alluring proſpects of futurity engaged your thoughts."

"You

"You would loſe your wager," returned Ildegerte.

"How!" exclaimed the Prince. "After all that Theodoric is ready to do for you?"

"'Tis true," ſaid ſhe, "that you are ſpeaking to a woman—to a woman who is not free from the weakneſſes of her ſex; but I never yet knew the tortures of ambition."

"You are right," anſwered Harold. "A crown has greater charms when from the hand of love."

"The firſt moment's love," rejoined the heroine, "is but the ſun-beam which awakes the ſeed. Whether there be a laſting ſtem,

or tranſient flower, contained within it, who can now determine? And who would venture to build a hut, in the hope that from this ſeed would grow a tree to overſhade his hut?"

"Truly," ſaid Harold, "if you can moralize thus, you are not in love."

"Who told you that I was in love?" demanded Ildegerte.

"So much bravery without ambition!" cried he. "So much beauty without love! Since I firſt knew that I had feelings, I have conſidered theſe two paſſions as the grand ſupports of life.—A crown, and a beauteous woman! He who offers ſuch rewards, may pile rocks upon rocks, and increaſe each drop

drop of rain into a ſtream. I ſcorn the rocks, and laugh at the ſtreams. I climb to the goal, or ſink to the bottom, and die in the attempt."

"If ſuch be your ideas," returned Ildegerte, "I pity you. Ambition towers aloft but deep is the abyſs to which it leads. Sweet is the draught which Love preſents, but the bitter is at the bottom."

"There let it ſtay then," replied Harold. "To empty the cup would be exceſs, and exceſs creates diſguſt."

"True it is," proceeded Ildegerte, "that were I, in the ſtorms of life, obliged to place reliance on one of theſe two paſſions, I ſhould prefer love to ambition."

"Indeed!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Harold. "Thanks, Ildegerte, that you have not quite broken the ſtaff which ſupports me; that it is but the throne which you refuſe, and not the man who ſits upon it. A heart, which loves you—a heart, which knows no other wiſh than to poſſeſs you—a faithful heart may hope at laſt to move you. I revive. Without a crown and ſceptre, I may contend for preference with him who bears them. I may hope——"

"Nothing may you hope," rejoined ſhe, "nor any other. I am free, and value my freedom. Prince, if you came hither in your own name to ſound me, our diſcourſe is at an end; but if you came in the King's name, tell him that I have conſidered the offer made by him yeſterday, that I honour him

him as my King, eſteem him as my friend, and love him as my brother. Tell him to be ſatisfied with theſe declarations of Ildegerte, who is free. Were ſhe no longer free, ſhe would glory in her chains, but dreadful indeed would be her lot, if ever forced to break them. Theodoric is an excellent young man, with a heart devoid of guile, but ſoft as wax. Who could be anſwerable for his fidelity?"

"I!" cried the King, ſuddenly throwing himſelf at her feet; "I, who will ſell my life for a broken arrow, my throne for a cup of poiſon, if Ildegerte refuſe to ſhare both with me. Why, beauteous woman, why this ſuſpicion, ſo diſgraceful both to you and me? Have you then but one perfection to bind me for ever to you? Is it your beauty

beauty only which has captivated me? Oh wiſdom and virtue, powerful and everlaſting ties of feeling ſouls, ſtill will ye be new and faſcinating, when wrinkles long have furrowed this full cheek, and when theſe auburn locks have long been grey. Sweet girl! oppoſe me no longer. Deſpiſe my crown, but not my heart."

Ildegerte was ſurpriſed, and felt herſelf kindly diſpoſed towards the graceful youth, who was laying at her feet. With a gentle and half-tender look, ſhe reached her hand to him, and ſtammered forth—

"Riſe, Theodoric, and leave me alone."

"Not till I can call this hand my own," returned he; "not till I have ſealed the affiance

on

on your lips.—Approach, Eſcill; the moment is arrived."

Eſcill, one of Theodoric's moſt illuſtrious Chiefs, entered the tent; in both hands he held a cuſhion of purple ſilk, bordered with golden fringe; upon the cuſhion laid a crown, glittering with precious ſtones. Eſcill bent his knee, and at the ſame moment martial muſic ſtruck the ear. The tent fell, and Ildegerte, with aſtoniſhment, beheld the whole army drawn up in battle array, with enſigns floating in the air, and ſpears ſparkling in the ſun-beams. She heard the loud and joyful ſhout—

"Long live Queen Ildegerte!"

She was no longer able to command her heart. She ſunk into Theodoric's arms, and hid her glowing cheeks in his throbbing boſom. He preſſed her to his heart, ſeized the dazzling crown, and placed it on her head.

Not far from them ſtood a triumphant carriage, decked with flowers and ribands. Four ſnow-white ſteeds pranced at its thill, and ſnorted as they obeyed the golden rein of the nervous charioteer. The enviable youth lifted the prize of love with tranſport into the carriage, and ſlowly paſſed the front of his troops, that he might ſhow his happineſs to every vaſſal. The army received him with loud acclamations. The kettle-drums rolled, the trumpets clanged, but louder than both, echoed the joyful cry—

"Long

"Long live Queen Ildegerte!"

When they reached the ſmall band of Amazons, the carriage was ſurrounded, the traces cut, and a thouſand times a thouſand hands drew the lovers to the altar of Siona (24). There waited a hoary-headed Prieſt, whoſe knife ſtill ſmoked with the blood of the recent ſacrifice. He prayed to Odin, bleſſed the couple, and received the oath of everlaſting love and fidelity. A ſumptuous banquet, by the light of a thouſand torches, cloſed the feſtive day. The ſweet ſmile of ſatisfaction ſhone on every countenance but one;—Harold's alone was gloomy and contemplative. The veil of night ſhrouded the happy pair. Theodoric found bliſs and heaven in Ildegerte's arms.

OH!

OH! that I were here allowed to caſt away my pen! Oh that I might not wake you from the ſweet idea that virtue had paſſed, enjoying its reward, and ſurrounded by unſullied bliſs, even to the grave!

Alas! our ſorrows and our happineſs are all a dream, and from this ecſtatic viſion was Ildegerte to be rouſed to miſery and horror.

NOTES

NOTES.

VOL. I.

(1) ODIN, alſo called Woden, Father of the Gods. He, his wife Freya, and ſon Thor, compoſe the ſupreme council of heaven. He is called The Univerſal Father, The Terrible and Severe God, The King of Slaughter, The God that carrieth Deſolation and Fire, The Active and Roaring Deity, The Giver of Victory, &c. The fourth day of the week is conſecrated to him, and therefore called Woden's day.

(2) Frea, or Freya, wife of Odin, and mother of the inferior deities. Theſe names are, by ſome, aſcribed to two Goddeſſes, the former being Queen of the Gods,

and the latter, ſiſter of Frey. To her the ſixth day of the week is conſecrated.

(3) Vingolf, the manſion of Love and Friendſhip.

(4) Utgarda Loke, an evil ſpirit, nearly reſembling our devil. He is deſcribed in the Edda (or Bible of the Northern nations) as exceeding handſome, but crafty and perfidious. He is called, The Artificer of Fraud, The Calumniator of the Gods, &c. He, nevertheleſs, dwelt in Heaven, till, as a puniſhment for his repeated crimes and attacks upon the Gods, they chained him to three ſharp ſtones, which are for ever cutting his fleſh; while a ſerpent, hanging over him, diſtils its venom, drop by drop, upon his face. In this ſituation he is to remain till the deſtruction of the world.

(5) The wolf Fenris, a ſon of Utgarda Loke. He was bred among the Gods; but they, being warned by oracles that he might one day become fatal to them, reſolved to confine him. No chains, however, could

be forged which were ſtrong enough to hold him. At length a dwarf, in the land of the Black Genii, ſupplied Odin with a bandage of uncommon ſtrength. Goranſon's deſcription of its texture is ſo ludicrous, that I am induced to tranſcribe it :

" Hic nervus ſex conſtabat rebus ; ſtrepitu nempe pedum felis, ex barbâ mulieris, radicibus montium, nervis urſinis, halitu piſcium, & ſputo avium."

" This ſtring conſiſted of ſix things, viz. the noiſe made by a cat's feet, the beard of a woman, the roots of mountains, the nerves of bears, the breath of fiſhes, and the ſpittle of birds."

Having bound the wolf with this cord, they drew it through a huge rock, to which he is doomed to be confined till the laſt day, when he is to break looſe, and devour the ſun.

(6) The ſerpent of Midgard, one of Utgarda Loke's children, and an enemy of the Gods. Odin threw

him to the bottom of the ocean, where he grew ſo large, that he wound himſelf around the whole globe of earth.

(7) Scald, the name given to the ancient bards, who were employed to compoſe odes and hymns, which were chaunted at every ſolemnity. Theſe ſongs were, in general, deſcriptions of eminent exploits, and were animated by an enthuſiaſtic ſpirit.

(8) Valhall, the palace of Odin, to which warriors are conveyed after death. Here they paſs their mornings in tournaments and battles; the reſt of the day is employed in feaſting on the wild boar Serimner (which, though dreſſed every morning, becomes entire again every night), and in quaffing Hydromel (or mead), which is adminiſtered to them in the ſculls of thoſe enemies whom they had ſlain while on earth.

(9) Gefione, the Goddeſs of Chaſtity.

(10) Noſſa,

TO THE

READER.

AS it is poſſible that my Reader may not be acquainted with the Runic mythology, I have added Notes, at the end of each Volume of this Work (to which the Numbers are a direction), explaining as much as is neceſſary to make it perfectly intelligible. Any further elucidation may be obtained by a reference to MR. MALLETT'S "Northern Antiquities;" which publication contains the Edda, tranſlated from the ancient Iſlandic tongue, and has principally ſupplied me with my Notes.

T.

(10) Noſſa, the daughter of Frea, a Goddeſs of ſuch exquiſite beauty that whoever is lovely and handſome, or whatever is precious, is called by her name.

(11) Vora, the Goddeſs of Prudence and Wiſdom, who is ſo penetrating, that nothing can remain hidden from her.

(12) Lofna, or Louna, the Goddeſs who aſſiſts lovers, and makes up differences between them and married perſons, be they ever ſo much at variance.

(13) Valkyries, Virgins who are ſent by Odin into the field of battle, to inſpire the warriors, to make choice of thoſe who are to be ſlain, and to alleviate the pangs of death. They are likewiſe employed in attending on the heroes who inhabit Valhall.

(14) Hela, or Death, the daughter of Utgarda Loke. She was precipitated into Niflheim by Odin, and there had the government of nine worlds given to her.

(15) Vara,

(15) Vara, the Goddeſs who receives all oaths, and puniſhes thoſe who violate them.

(16) Such were the tenets of the Runic doctrine in ſome countries, though, in others, it was ſuppoſed that the warriors did not take their enemies to Valhall as ſervants, but only their ſculls as cups. See Note (8).

(17) Thor, the eldeſt ſon of Odin, the ſtrongeſt and moſt intrepid among the Gods. He is ſaid, by ſome, to launch the thunder of Odin, and to be principally conſulted in heaven relative to the deciſion of victory. He always carries a mace or club, which he graſps with gauntlets of iron; and which, as often as he diſcharges it, returns immediately to his hand. He is alſo poſſeſſed of a girdle, which has the virtue of renewing his ſtrength as often as is needful. The fifth day of the week (Thor's day) is conſecrated to him.

(18) Frey,

(18) Frey, the mildeſt of all the Gods. He preſides over the ſeaſons of the year, and beſtows fertility.

(19) Niord, the God of Winds, who checks the fury of the ſea, ſtorms, and fire.

(20) Lyna, the Goddeſs, to whoſe care are committed thoſe whom Frea intends to deliver from peril.

(21) Niflheim, or Hell, literally ſignifying Evil-Home.

(22) Odin's golden bucklers. The Edda tells us, that Gylfe, King of Sweden, went diſguiſed to Aſgard, the court of the Gods, and there ſaw theſe bucklers.

"Tunc cernebat ille palatium. Tecta ejus erant tecta aureis clypeis."

"Then

"Then he beheld a palace. The roof of it was covered with golden ſhields."

We are likewiſe told, that Eger, a Daniſh Nobleman, once viſited the Gods, on which occaſion Odin had ranged through the hall ſwords of ſuch amazing brilliancy, as to make any other illumination needleſs, and had covered the walls with glittering ſhields.

(29) I doubt not that many of our modern belles will be ſhocked at this diſguſting preſent of Ildegerte. But, let them revert to thoſe rude ages, in which barbariſm was extolled as virtue, and delicacy of ſentiment condemned as effeminacy. A ſcabby or mangy dog (for this is my author's expreſſion, though, from deference to the feelings of thoſe above-mentioned, I have rendered it in terms as unexceptionable as I could, without forfeiting the meaning of the original), is a preſent, mentioned more than once in Gothic hiſtory, and was often ſent as a kind of playful defiance. Let theſe nice ladies, then, call

to

to mind the ſpirit and manners of thoſe times, and if they be not ſuperfine indeed, Ildegerte will loſe nothing in their eyes.

(24) Siona or Siofna, the Goddeſs of wedlock.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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